Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i

The Return to Being

A Translation of *Risalat al-Walayah*

Translated by
Fazel Asadi Amjad
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Introduced and annotated by
S. K. Toussi

The Return to Being tells the story of the journey of the human soul from the material world to its ultimate goal – annihilation in Allah's actions, attributes and essence. In this work, 'Allamah Tabataba'i outlines the human-divine relationship and the stages by which human beings can reach human perfection in their journey towards the station of 'being in Being'. The author contends that all human beings have the capacity to achieve this highest stage of spiritual perfection whereby they can witness the beauty and glory of God. Integrating ontological and epistemological principles, Tabataba'i elaborates on the two interior and exterior aspects of realities, including religion, which manifest at different existential levels. The author also suggests spiritual methods to anyone who would like to learn more about theoretical and practical principles in order to attain spiritual refinement and to achieve the interior dimensions of existence and religious knowledge.

Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i (1892-1981) is the author of a twenty-volume Qur'anic commentary entitled *al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an* as well as several groundbreaking works on Islamic philosophy and mysticism. Additionally, he authored a number of books on Shi'a history and doctrine to bring about a better awareness of Shi'ism throughout the world.

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The Treatise on Friendship with God

Risalat al-Walayah

by

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Introduction

'Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i was arguably one of the most influential Shi'a thinkers of recent times. He left behind over forty books and treatises in various fields of Islamic thought. An example of his wide-ranging scholarship can be seen in his *Shi'ah dar Islam* (translated into English as *Shi'a Islam*). This work consists of his clarifications and expositions about Shi'a doctrine and Shi'a history in response to the questions of the theologian and philosopher, Henry Corbin.

'Allamah Tabataba'i will be remembered for his *Al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*, his twenty-volume interpretation of the Qur'an; but Tabataba'i also wrote more than twenty treatises on topics in philosophy, mysticism, and logic. In one of his particularly influential philosophical works, *Usul-i Falsafih va Ravish-i Rializm*, Tabataba'i presents significant philosophical ideas which later became the basis of new ethical and epistemological doctrines. Murtada Mutahhari – 'Allamah Tabataba'i's eminent disciple – in his annotations to *Usul-i Falsafih*, masterfully interpreted some of these principles and suggested some interesting implications. 'Allamah Tabataba'i demonstrated his devotion to Mulla Sadra's transcendent philosophy in particular through his annotation of nine volumes of Sadra's monumental work, *Al-Hikmat al-Muta'aliyyah fi al-Asfar al-'Aqliyyat al-Arba'ah*; his two philosophy textbooks, *Bidayat al-Hikmah* and *Nihayat al-Hikmah*; and his philosophical discussions in *Al-Mizan* as well as the work translated in the present volume.

Given the foregoing, much can be said about 'Allamah

Tabataba'i. However, in these lines I will focus on introducing what has been presented in this volume under the title of *The Return to Being: The Treatise on Friendship with God* which is a translation of Tabataba'i's *Risalat al-Walayah*. Although a short treatise, *The Return to Being* addresses very delicate philosophical and mystical issues. The book focuses on the human soul's relationship with divinity, the different stages of man's proximity to God, and the process by which the human being can implement his spiritual and intellectual perfection to reach the stage of *wali Allah* (a friend of God). Additionally, throughout the main exposition of the treatise, Tabataba'i examines several innovative mystico-philosophical hypotheses.

The Return to Being is composed of five chapters. In each chapter, after reviewing his main argument from the previous chapter, he proposes a few new philosophical points and then supports his assertions by Qur'anic verses and *hadiths*.

In brief, we can say that this treatise tells the story of the journey of the human soul from this material world to its final destination which Tabataba'i calls the annihilation (*fana'*) of the soul in Allah's actions, attributes, and essence. In order to elaborate on the different stages of this spiritual journey, he starts his discussion with the mystical topics of the internal (*batin*) and external (*zahir*) aspects of realities. In order to analyse the philosophical nature of different existents at various levels of reality, he integrates his main argument with his famous doctrine of *i'tibariyyat* (which he discusses in *Usul-i Falsafih*). Having elaborated on the internal and external from different angles, Tabataba'i applies his argument to the human soul and body as two interior and exterior aspects of the human being; he explains how understanding the inner aspect of realities – including religion – requires realising the inner aspect of the human self, which culminates in achieving the highest stage of man, that is, being in the presence of God and

viewing His Beauty and Glory in the Hereafter (*ru'yat Allah*). The route to this noble achievement requires passing through the exterior aspect and then, from there, towards the interior one – from the lowest aspect of the human entity to the highest, from the body to the soul (as a perfect sample of God's creation), and from the soul (as the inner) to the inner of the inner until the human being attains the presence of divinity (*mahdar al-ilahi*) and annihilation of all its corporeal limits. For Tabataba'i, the different stages towards human annihilation in God are three levels of faith (*iman*) which are not only experienced in the next world. They are three stages towards mankind's achievement of spiritual perfection which begin from the soul's endeavour to purify itself in both this world and in the next.

I'tibariyyat as a Level of the Exterior

In order to elaborate on the two concepts of interior and exterior, Tabataba'i starts his discussion with *i'tibariyyat* (conceptual inventions), but with a different approach from the one he takes in *Usul-i Falsafih*. The term *i'tibariyyat* is not his; rather it was used by other philosophers, especially Mulla Sadra. When demonstrating the principality of existence over quiddity, in opposition to the essentialists, Sadra founded his ontology on the doctrine that what is 'real' in the objective realm is existence. According to the principality of existence, what constitutes the reality of all entities is their very existence; quiddity is a mental manifestation of existence that the human mind abstracts from different modes of being. Therefore, quiddities are subjective realities posited in the mind. He called them *i'tibari*, and their existence is real, objective and the source of all external effects. To both Mulla Sadra and Tabataba'i, the locus of *i'tibari* concepts is the mind; however, Sadra's

argument is ontological, and when he uses *i'tibari*, he specifically refers to *mahiyyah* instead of 'existence'.[1] Tatataba'i's discussion of *i'tibariyat*, however, is in a completely different context. For Tatataba'i, *i'tibariyyat* are those concepts which are abstracted from a special relation between two real entities, such as the concept of ownership which is abstracted from the relationship between owner and property. Tabataba'i asserts that most of the concepts with which human beings manage their socio-political affairs are *i'tibariyyat*. Although epistemological, this invaluable and original idea has many important jurisprudential and ethical implications.

Elaborating on this view, Tabataba'i explains in *Usul-i*

[1] According to the traditional view of the nature of knowledge from Aristotle to Islamic Peripatetic philosophers – including Ibn Sina, Nasir al-Din Tusi and also the majority of Muslim theologians – concepts are pictures of reality that mirror what is beyond the mind. It is precisely the quality of concepts that leads to an error that is especially detrimental to understanding those concepts designated by the term 'quiddity' (*mahiyyah*), which translates the *ti esti* or whatness of Aristotle. For information about Islamic theories of knowledge see Franz Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant: The Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970), p. 48-49.

Mulla Sadra departs from his predecessors by equating knowledge (*'ilm*) with being (*wujud*). For Sadra, the ultimate object of knowledge is being, which is particularised through a number of modes, states and instances. In fact, in many places, Sadra defines knowledge simply as a mode of being (*nahw al-wujud*): when we say that we know something, we affirm or deny the existence of something, and this cannot be other than being. In this generic sense, being is the standing condition of all knowledge and precedes the discursive considerations of the knowing subject. This issue is one of the most delicate discussions in Sadra's philosophy, and we cannot discuss the details of that in these short notes. For more information see vol. 1, ch. 3 in Mulla Sadra's *Al-Hikmat al-Muta'alliyah fi al-Asfar al-'Aqliyyat al-Arba'ah*, ed. R. Lutfi, 9 volumes (Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1990). Hereafter abbreviated as *Asfar*.

Falsafih that just like the objective realm – in which natural laws govern the relations between realities such as human beings, animals and plants – in social life, numerous rules also govern human society; without these rules, human life would be impossible. Following this assertion, Tabataba'i explains that all the normative principles in law, ethics, politics and the like are rooted in natural laws, because the human mind cannot invent these concepts on its own.[2]

[2] In the sixth chapter of *Usul-i Falsafih*, having applied this philosophical idea to moral concepts, Tabataba'i presents his controversial idea that moral good and evil are considered as *i'tibariyyat*. Following this assertion, he concludes that all moral 'ought-tos' stem from the fact that nature in itself has some ends towards which it moves. Inanimate objects, plants, animals, and man – so far as they fall within the domain of instinct and are not voluntary – are moved towards their goal by nature. There are certain acts which take place by the means of volition and thought. In such acts, too, man has certain objectives which have to be attained voluntarily. These ends are also the ends of nature, but nature cannot achieve them directly, so they can only be achieved through the agency of man's will and thought. It is here that the need for these conceptual inventions and the invention of 'ought-tos' should arise. For example, humans, like plants, need food, but they can only obtain it by means of volition and thought, unlike plants which obtain food from the ground directly through their roots, or animals which are drawn towards food by instinct. However, the human being innately possesses two systems: the system of nature as well as the system of thought and will. The latter is subordinate to the former and is directed towards achieving nature's ends.

Applying such a principle to moral 'ought-tos' is one the most controversial discussions in Tabataba'i's philosophy. Considering Mutahhari's annotations to *Usul-i Falsafih*, Tabataba'i refers to individual and mutable 'moral ought-tos' when he claims that morality ought to derive from nature. No doubt some 'ought-tos' are particular and related to individuals. For instance, one person may need a certain kind of training, and he might say, 'I should take this subject,' while another who does not need it would say, 'I should not take that subject.' There is no doubt that individual and particular

However, in *The Return to Being* 'Allamah links his idea of *i'tibariyyat* with his hermeneutical discussion about the internal (*batin*) and external (*zahir*) aspects of religion (*din*) (and other realities). In Chapter 1, Tabataba'i says that the human being externally lives under a contractual system but internally lives under the natural laws of creation. To understand this statement, we need to examine the *i'tibariyyat* more precisely. Tabataba'i asserts that *i'tibariyyat* such as ownership (*malikiyyah*) are mental constructions, developed by people in order to run their societal affairs. However, these same contractual concepts and affairs are rooted within a higher reality, because the human intellect does not have the capability of creating such subjective constructions by itself. Although the human mind constructs these concepts, they are nevertheless not concepts that are purely invented, which have no objective sources. As long as the conceptual faculty of man did not make an existential connection with the outside world, man would not be able to create an image of it. Thus the intellectual activities of the soul are to create new concepts by means of creative mental actions such as judgment, generalisation, composition, abstraction and detachment

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'oughts' are relative. For example, when I say that a particular food is good for me, this statement has a theoretical and a practical aspect. My conclusion concerning the benefit of the food constitutes its theoretical aspect, and 'I ought to eat that food' constitutes the practical aspect. In short, these kinds of oughts are particular and changeable. On the basis that every 'ought to' is directed towards some goal, as Tabataba'i asserts, the crucial question in ethics is: are there any universal and immutable 'ought-tos' shared by all human beings based on which we can establish moral common sense and ethical universal principles? If yes, then how can the human being find the criteria of universal ought-tos? 'Allamah Tabataba'i (and Mutahhari in his annotation) attempts to answer this key ethical question in Chapter 6 of *Usul-i Falsafih va Ravish-i Rializm* (Qum: The Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute, 1996).

from the material qualities.

The system of *i'tibariyyat* requires human social life; there are no such *i'tibariyyat* where there is no society or community. Tabataba'i maintains that all that has been transmitted to us from religious sources (including social and ethical rulings and all knowledge and understanding of the realities before and after the material realm) talks about realities using *i'tibariyyat* in this material realm. The shariah uses the language of *i'tibariyyat* to describe the realities which form the essence or interior of religion (*batin al-din*). Of course, *i'tibariyyat* are limited to this realm; since the previous and next realms are governed by the real rules of creation, those realms do not need worldly regulations. Although the realities of the material realm, the previous realm, and the next realm are one and the same in their existence, they are manifested differently, and so the realities of the other realms are manifested here through the metaphorical language of *i'tibariyyat*. The different levels of manifestation of realities are referred to as the 'interior' and 'exterior', and the interior in turn is the exterior of the higher level of existence.

Interior (*Batin*) and Exterior (*Zahir*)

Tabataba'i's discussion in this treatise centres on the two concepts of the exterior (*zahir*) and interior (*batin*) of the world. In Islamic literature, this world (*dunya*)[3] is described

[3] The term *dunya* as contrasted with *akhirah* generally refers to the natural or material and mundane world, just as the latter refers to the Hereafter. *Dunya* originates from *dunuww*, meaning 'what is nearer', or from *dani*, meaning 'what is lower and lesser in terms of its worth as compared to the worth of the coming world'. At any rate, it is called *dunya* in an effort to describe either the nearer and visible or the lesser and lower world, which is the world of matter and corporeality, just as the Hereafter is called *akhirah* to indicate that it

as a veil and a place for ignorance, darkness, and torment, and is also in opposition to the 'next world' (*akhirah*). However, it is emphasised that this world is necessary as a prerequisite to the next world. A great number of sayings qualify both the *dunya* and *akhirah* and describe their interrelationship.[4] Accordingly, the *dunya* has two different faces: one ugly and one beautiful; one leading to the evil and the other to the good aspect of human existence. One can be so deeply engaged in the world of matter to the extent that one thinks of nothing but material gain for one's own sake. This for the most part leads people to seek their own personal profit and to become lost in the process, to the extent that they ignore their fellow human beings. This finally creates corruption, vandalism, and destruction in human society and increases poverty, injustice, and oppression. Due to this aspect of worldly life, it is said that the *dunya* is considered as the origin of all sorts of corruption and immorality.[5] The *dunya* is also compared to frivolous or idle pleasure.[6] Seen from this specific angle, the *dunya* can draw people into the pursuit of material gain and pleasure and divert them from transcendental pleasure, from attaining eternal profit and happiness.[7]

However, in Islamic culture, this is not the complete image of the worldly life. The worldly life can also help one

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is either the further or the greater world that comes after, where human beings will reap the consequences of what they did in the material world. See S. 'Ali Akbar Qurashi, *Qamus-i Qur'an* (Tehran: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah, 1982), p. 362. See also Muhammad Baqir al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, 110 volumes (Qum: Dar al-Kutub, 1374 AH (solar)), vol. 57, p. 355, no. 1.

[4] Mulla Muhsin Kashani, *Tafsir al-Safi* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-A'lami lil-Matbu'at, 1979), vol. 2, p. 292. See also his *Al-Haqai'q fi Mahasin al-Akhlaq* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Arabi, 1979), section 3, p. 69-129.

[5] *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 7, p. 59, no. 29.

[6] Holy Qur'an, 47:36.

[7] *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 1, p. 134, no. 30.

to achieve happiness in both the present and the coming stages of life and attain the pleasure of God. In this sense, the *dunya* is viewed as a bridge to the life of the Hereafter, to the *akhirah*. Moreover, it is in this world where God, as shown in the Qur'an, provides faithful believers with a goodly provision by means of which they may seek their happiness in both this world and the world after.

With this perspective, Tabataba'i explains how the whole world and its levels have been created in the best order. He explains how the law of causality and the ordering of material phenomena in the natural world and also the causal relation between hierarchal levels are part of the goodness of the whole order. These phenomena operate within a system of causal relations and links. This does not entail any restraint on God's power and wisdom; rather, the present world-order functions with an internal coherence to provide the highest opportunity for man to move to the higher stages of existence.

The limitations, imperfections and evils of this world are due to the incapacity of this level of existence, not to a deficiency in the power of God. This philosophical-theological explanation and justification of evil in the material world is one of the implications of Sadra's principle of the 'primacy of existence over quiddity' (*asalat al-wujud*). According to this principle, existence is the source of all realities and goodness. In the ascending order of created existents, the closer a being is to necessary existents, the more 'good' it becomes. A plant has more being and thus more goodness than an inanimate object because it contains more life and complexity and benefits other beings in the cosmos. In his commentary on the *Shifa'*, Sadra says that good by itself is that which affects everyone and by which others become delighted and to which others are attracted. In reality, this is being (*wujud*). The variation of things in goodness is proportionate to their variation in being. The stronger a thing's being, the

greater its goodness.[8]

Since ultimate goodness belongs only to God, all contingent beings contain a degree of goodness in proportion to their proximity to God but cannot claim to be on a par with the source of goodness. The world has to be less than God to be what it is. This world, as inhabited by lesser beings, serves higher beings and causes, in the sense that all beings contribute to a higher aim and end; this end is the completion of the potential perfection of species. The imperfection and incapacity of the existents in the material world only relatively appear to be so when placed within the network of hierarchical relations.[9] Material creations are created in a relational framework whereby everything benefits from something else, so the lowest level of creation provides benefit and utility despite its incapacity.

Therefore, according to *asalat al-wujud*, the differences that we understand among things in the world are all rooted in their 'portion of being' (*hissat al-wujud*) and have no source other than the reality of 'being'. All things in the world differ in being, just as they share 'being'. The reality of being (in contrast to the concept of being) is a reality that admits differences and a multiplicity of types, and every being differs from other beings in intensity and weakness, or unlimitedness and limitedness. While one is weaker (that is, more dependent and more needy), the other is more intense (that is, more independent and less needy). These differences in being (that is, differences in dependence and intensity) are the source for all differences

[8] Mulla Sadra, *Sharh va Ta'liq bar Ilahiyyat-i Shifa'*, ed. N. Habibi (Tehran: Intisharat-i Bunyad-i Hikmat-i Islami-yi Sadra (SIPRIn), 1382 AH), p. 75.

[9] Mulla Sadra says, 'God made what is nobler a cause for the being of what is lower, and a reason for its subsistence, complementing and leading it to its maximum end and ultimate goal.' Ibid.

and varieties in the world.

Having taken this existential principle into account, Tabataba'i explains the three stages of animate material existents: plants, animals and humans. A plant is lesser in being and lower in rank than an animal, its state more basic than that of an animal. This is so because the matter of plants has been made as sustenance for the matter of animals. In this way, the plant soul has been made a servant to the animal soul. By the same token, the level of animal souls is lower and less perfect than the level of human souls, and so animal souls serve the level of human souls. In line with the principle of 'the best order', a hierarchical world-order with intermediary stages of beings between God as pure goodness has been established.[10]

At this point, in the beginning of Chapter 2, Tabataba'i asserts that one aspect of this order is that lesser existents are the effects of more intense ones, which are causes, because their perfection and being exists at the level of cause. This means that vertical existents in the material realm – that is the material realities in the world – work within a casual system as the hierarchal levels and realms (that is, the previous world, this world, and the next world) are related to each other in a causal relationship. In the chapter on causality, following Mulla Sadra, Tabataba'i proves that any effect in relation to its existential cause is like the relation of a shadow to its owner, meaning that the effect owes its existence and reality to its cause.[11] From the same perspective, he proves that the existence of this material realm precedes other signs, and the relationship between the hierarchical realms is that of cause and an

[10] For more information about 'the best order' of the world, see Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, vol. 4, p. 114 & vol. 6, p. 316.

[11] In volume 2 of *Asfar*, Sadra discusses how effect is like a shadow of cause (*zilliyyat al-ma'lul li-'illatih*), p. 130-200. See also *Asfar*, vol. 1, p. 440.

effect, until it reaches the cause of the first causes which is self-necessary, that is, Allah.

It follows from the preceding paragraphs that the difference among beings is the difference in levels and degrees of existence starting with the self-necessary being and ending with the potential beings. Reflection on the reality of 'being' leads to the conclusion that, apart from the self-necessary being which itself is 'the reality of being' and the summit of the hierarchy of being, other levels of being have no reality other than belonging and relation to the self-necessary being. Anything that is not the divine essence is nothing other than relation and belonging to Him. Other levels of being are His manifestations (*zuhurat*). Manifestation and belonging to the necessary being or other levels of dependent beings have no being without relation to the necessary being. If someone thinks that in addition to the source of being – which is the self-necessary being – there are or may be other beings that have reality more than belonging and relation to the self-necessary being, he has erred and has not understood the reality of being.

An effect by itself, as an effect, has no reality other than reliance and dependence and has no meaning other than being an effect and subordinate, without having an essence subject to these meanings, as the absolutely originating cause has no essence and reality other than being the principle and source of everything, and all relations and dependence go back to Him. The chain of beings – including both causes and effects – originates from an essence which is a simple luminous primary existential reality free from multiplicity, deficiency, contingency, shortcoming and obscurity: free from anything accidental or additional to Him, internally or externally. He is the source and other beings are just His states and affairs. He is

the inner reality of everything and they are just manifestations (*zuhurat*) of the reality.[12]

Tabataba'i says that like the absolute existence (*wujud al-mutlaqah*), the material world and its beings (such as its nature, art, and divine law (including its canonical rites)) possess an interior dimension as well as an exterior dimension. Nature and its grand phenomena – such as the shining of the sun and the moon, the seasonal cycles, the mountains, and the streams – are means for contemplating spiritual realities. They are signs (*ayat*) of God. Although they are forms in the external world, they mirror a reality, which is at once inward and transcendent. The inward aspect of this world is the world of the *akhirah*. Precisely speaking, the interior aspect of worldly existents will be manifested in the next world. People will witness the reality when they are relieved from their bodily existence. This is why Allah called the next world 'the day of witnessing' (*yawm al-shuhud*). Nevertheless, this world and its manifestations are divine signs because they lead people to the inward and unseen world.

Just like other worldly entities, mankind has two dimensions as well. The goal of the inward life is to reach the divine and to see God everywhere. The inward dimension is the key to understanding metaphysics and traditional cosmology as well as penetrating the essential meaning of religion and of all religions, for at the heart of every authentic religion lies the one Truth which resides also at the heart of all things and, most of all, at the heart of man.

[12] *Asfar*, vol. 2, p. 300.

The Human Soul as the Inward Aspect of the Human Being

Having demonstrated that everything (including divine law and natural phenomena) has an inward aspect as a true reality revealed from the divine realm, Tabataba'i says that the human being also has inward and outward aspects.[13] While, outwardly, the soul is concealed and only the physical body is visible, inwardly, the soul is manifested through man's spirit. His outward abides through his inward, and his inward is personified by his outward. His first is a sustaining shell, and his last is a pure engendered core.[14]

Tabataba'i's suggestion of a parallel perception of the internal and external aspects of human existence is inspired by transcendent philosophy.[15] The external and internal are based on the assumption of the existential unity of the soul and body and the rejection of any duality between their two essences. Mulla Sadra established this remarkable assertion through his famous principle that the soul is bodily in its advent but spiritual in its survival (*al-nafs jismaniyyat al-huduth wa ruhaniyyat al-baqa'*).[16] Based on this principle,

[13] See Chapter 3.

[14] For more information about the inward and outward aspects of man, see Mulla Sadra, *Shawahid al-Rububiyyah*, ed. Sayyid Jalal al-Din Ashtiyani, with glosses of Mulla Hadi Sabzavari (Mashhad: Mashhad University Press, 1360 AH (solar)), p. 375-6. Abbreviated hereinafter as *Shawahid*.

[15] Throughout *Al-Mizan*, Tabataba'i very explicitly defends the unity of the soul and the body in this world and the bodily advent of the human soul. For example, see *Al-Mizan*, trans. M. Musavi Hamidani (Qum: Nashr-i Raja', 1367 AH (solar)), Surat al-Dahr, verses 2-3 & 31 and Surat al-Sajdah, verses 1-14.

[16] Sadra explains this doctrine in his chapter on *'ilm al-nafs*. According to this principle, the human soul is initially and outwardly revealed and shaped as a totally corporeal entity. For

when the soul descends to this world, it is manifested as a pure spirit; hence, it needs the bodily senses to bring it into contact with the world of knowable reality. In other words, the natural exercises and activities of the soul require 'being through a body'. According to this principle, the human body does not have an existence of its own; rather, man is intellectual, sensible, living, corporeal, and existent by reason of his intellectual soul. Only this theory can account for the fact of the substantial unity of soul and body. If the body and the soul had their own separate existences, they would necessarily be two subsisting things. No matter how closely they approached each other or how intimate their actions, they would forever remain two beings and never become one substantial unit. Tabataba'i says that the human being is a real single entity which is the origin of all bodily and spiritual effects and actions while the soul is still immaterial in its essence.[17]

The assertion that the spiritual soul can at one and the same time act as part of a corporeal composite and still remain spiritual or independent of matter is not a contradiction. We recognise the human soul as a superior form since it surpasses the perfection and power of lower forms; therefore, the human soul, which is superior to animal and vegetable forms, possesses the powers of the lower forms of its matter. The human soul rises from the lowest stage of its material existence to the highest level of its spirituality through a substantial motion (*al-harakat al-jawhariyyah*). This means that the human soul emerges on the body through a substantial motion which is in its turn existential. Based on this principle, the soul comes into

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Sadra, this means that the biological and intellectual functions of the human organism are nothing but the outward manifestations of a single and simple reality. See *Asfar*, vol. 8, section 7, ch. 3.

[17] *Al-Mizan*, vol. 20, p. 139.

being in the form of bodily existence. Then, through its substantial motion, it passes through physical stages towards its refined nature. In contrast to common belief, the soul does not attach to the body from the outside; rather, the very reality of the soul emerges on the material body at the beginning of its temporal course, and then the actualisation of the physical reality under the principle of substantial change ends with the spiritual stage. In other words, human existence changes and develops by itself from a weaker existence to a more intense existence; this change and movement constitutes the entity of the soul, and because of this developmental motion, new possibilities and greater realisation of the realities open up.

Since the soul emerges on the basis of matter, it cannot be absolutely material, for 'emergence' requires that the emergent be of a higher level than that which it emerges out of or on the basis of, and then the identity of the body is due to the soul which is its final form. The emergent soul (including its forms, events and processes) is irreducible to and unpredictable from the lower level of matter from which it emerges. These all indicate that the natural phase of the existence of the soul begins with a physical nature.

Based on the idea of the bodily advent of the human soul, the way is paved towards the assertion of 'the human being as a single and simple reality'. This single special entity comes into being in a body and gradually becomes transformed into its spiritual substance in which the soul is the inner force behind all the developmental processes which end with the intellect. The highest stage of intellection becomes manifest after the full realisation of the sense organs and the internal faculties such as perception, memory and finally self-realisation as the first step towards understanding the inner aspect of the

realities.[18]

Among all creatures, only the human being can experience all the stages and realms of existence. The inner force of such an entity comes from the realm of divinity; as soon as it manifests in the material realm, it starts its ascending movement toward its main abode. However, it should be noted that not every movement from corporeality to spirituality is concomitant with perfection. From a religious perspective, spirituality is not necessarily morally good since Satan is also a spiritual entity. The ascending movement is perfectional, meaning that it passes through the right paths (*sirat al-mustaqim*) with its own spiritual demands and religious requests. In Chapter 4, Tabataba'i discusses the importance and role of self-knowledge (*ma'rifat al-nafs*) in finding the right route. This knowledge is the starting point of human self-realisation and the spiritual journey, and from it stem all moral virtues which can lead to the achievement of his ultimate goal.

Having used the above-mentioned philosophy of the soul and the existential unity of the soul and body in this realm, Tabataba'i expresses two bodily and spiritual aspects of the human being in his own mystical language. Applying the concepts of 'interiority' and 'exteriority', he says that the human reality is initially and outwardly revealed and shaped as an entirely corporeal entity. For Tabataba'i, this means that the biological and intellectual functions of the human organism are nothing but the outward manifestations of a single and simple reality. Although the higher level of human consciousness is aware of the inward aspect of the self, it does not neglect the outward aspect. This is the first step of the spiritual perfection of the human soul and its journey towards annihilation (*fana'*). To attain realisation of the interior dimension, the human

[18] See Chapter 2.

soul needs to experience the exterior and bodily dimensions of the divine law and religious rites. Nobody can gain the virtue of the interior aspect of prayer, for instance, without performing the exterior prayer. The same process of interiorisation takes place as far as the other central rites or pillars of Islam are concerned.

Since human nature is open to both the sensible and intelligible (or the outward and the inward), he is open to two dimensions of religion. The dual nature of religious law is its defining characteristic. As it is difficult to understand another sphere and another mode of existence (that is. the inward aspect) because they are not conceivable through the external senses, people without a perfect intellect fail to understand the inward aspect of this world. Since they neglect their inner dimension, that is, their spirit, they are happy with this world and its material enjoyments and bodily comforts.[19]

According to this mystical perspective, the function of religion is to provide the human being with everything he needs to set up his worldly life and understand the outward (*zahir*) and then move towards the inward (*batin*) realities; to move from the bodily instance of the human being to its immaterial stage and – ontologically speaking – from a lesser existence to a more intense one. This universal function is especially true of Islam, which is a divine command to establish order both in human society and within the human soul while, at the same time, facilitating the interior life and preparing the soul to return to Allah. He is the First (*awwal*) and the Last (*akhir*), the Outward (*zahir*) and the Inward (*batin*).[20]

Through His outwardness, God created this material

[19] For more details on Tabataba'i's discussion see *Asfar*, vol. 4, p. 415 & vol. 2, p. 345.

[20] See the above-mentioned discussion about causality.

world which is the world of separation and multiplicity; through His inwardness, He brings human beings back to their origin in the world of the spirit and unity. Religion is the means whereby this journey is made possible, and it is reflected in the structure of creation itself which issues from God and returns to Him. Religion consists of one dimension which is outward and another which, upon the basis of this outwardness, leads to the inward. Only through performing the outward aspect of the shariah can man travel from the realm of matter to the realm of spirit or from the *i'tibariyyat* to the realities, reach the Truth (*haqiqah*), be annihilated in the realm of divinity, and witness God, the inner of all inner realities.[21] Only the human being can experience all the stages of existence. A 'perfect human being' is a soul who can reconcile these two aspects of his existence, namely, the material and the spiritual, the outer and the inner. Through his inner aspect, he is open to his divine dimension, and through his outer aspect, he is open to the realities of the material affairs of this world, with which he is able to understand the wider human condition and thus guide people towards good and away from evil. This state of harmonious balance and perfection arises from experiencing all the stages of existence – bodily and immaterial, the lowest and the highest, unity and multiplicity, and the seen and the unseen realms.

In this treatise – as in his other works – Tabataba'i demonstrates his arguments by various Qur'anic verses and

[21] The rites of the shariah, such as the daily prayers (*salat*), fasting (*sawm*), the pilgrimage (*hajj*), the religious tax (*zakat*), and holy struggle (*jihad*), are all means of man's worldly life which enable him to achieve his final destination. These rites themselves also possess inward dimensions and levels of meaning which man can reach according to the degree of his faith (*iman*) and the quality of his virtue or inner reality (or truth).

traditions. To prove his central assertion in this treatise (namely, the exterior and interior aspects of religion), he cites the verse: 'And the life of the world is nothing but a sport and a play; and as for the next abode, that most surely is the life – did they but know!' (29:64). This means that the real and true life is in the Hereafter because Allah has said this world is only an amusement and a play. When explaining this verse, 'Allamah Tabataba'i says in *Al-Mizan* that the word *'lahw'* refers to anything wasteful that distracts man from more important and beneficial actions. The material world qualifies as *lahw* since, with its glitter and deceptive amusements, it prevents man from attaining eternal bliss. The word *'la'ib'* refers to things such as children's games, which are organised but have imaginary purposes. The life of this world is an amusement and a game, and it is temporary and short the same way that children's games are temporary and short. Although children start playing their games with a lot of excitement and motivation, they soon become bored of them and leave them.[22]

In another verse, Allah says: 'They know the outward of this world's life, but of the Hereafter they are absolutely heedless' (30:7). This verse shows that there is something more to this world other than its exterior – namely, its interior, which is the Hereafter. In *Al-Mizan,* 'Allamah says: 'The exterior world contains the material which the people of the exterior (*ahl al-zahir*) can externally and outwardly sense, and this sense makes them go after the material and get attached to it and forget the interior aspect of life and neglect the true benefits of it.'[23]

'Allamah then makes ethical use of these philosophical concepts. According to Surat al-Najm (53:29-30),

[22] *Al-Mizan*, vol. 16, p. 224.
[23] Ibid., p. 236.

remembrance of Allah involves being on a journey and moving towards Him; turning away from Him is deviation from the divine path. We cannot achieve the remembrance of Allah unless we turn away from this world. Anyone who turns away from the remembrance of Allah will find that his knowledge is limited to the exterior matters of this world and will not ascend higher.

Following these verses, 'Allamah mentions some *hadiths*, such as: 'We messengers talk to people according to their level of understanding.' This can be true when there are some concepts which a group of people cannot comprehend. In other words, this *hadith* and others similar to it refer to quality and not quantity, meaning that the reality of knowledge cannot be understood by intellects which are limited to logic. The Prophet (S) and Ahl al-Bayt (A) chose different levels and methods of explanation when propagating religion. Many times, they used simple concepts and expressions to preach sophisticated metaphysical realities. While they sometimes used logical and intellectual discussions to convey their points, they often alluded to unique and pure concepts without going into detail.

Ordinary human intellects cannot grasp the subtle divine realities that descend from the high level to the ordinary level. Therefore, to understand the essence of religion – the part that cannot be understood by intellectual reasoning – man must purify himself in order to transcend this material world. As long as worldly limitations hamper the soul, the soul cannot witness the reality and will not be able to comprehend other realms of existence. Purification of the soul and adhering to the Household of the Prophet are both necessary to attain this divine knowledge. In other words, anyone who wants to understand the reality of religion needs to free himself from worldly attachments and bodily desires which block his inner growth. (Of course, intellectual study is important

as well.) In this way, 'the fusing of perfection through divine knowledge' becomes clear and apparent to the soul.

The Immaterial World is the Realm of Unity

Considering his discussion on the causal relation between hierarchical realms, one can conclude that all the perfections in this lower realm exist at a much higher level in the other realms which are the cause of this material realm. After mentioning this, Tabataba'i talks about the limitations of the material realm and how natural and ethical evil causes pain and limits material pleasure. The existence of evil, as with physical and spiritual illnesses, is due to the limited capacity of this realm; thus, in the immaterial realm (which is higher than the material and intermediary realms), the boundaries are lifted and all the pleasures and perfections exist without any deficiency of time or existence, so no pain or calamity can be found in its totality and absoluteness.

In other words, deficiency is the result of limitation. The fewer limits there are, the less incompleteness and defects are found, and, for this reason, the immaterial realm does not have the limitations of the material realm. For example, various pleasures – such as the pleasure of listening to nice music or eating and drinking – can all be felt at the same time. The philosophical explanation of this concept is as follows:

The more intense existence becomes and the closer it draws to unity, the more it will include multiplicities and will encompass contradictory objects. So objects which are separated from each other in the material realm are united in the immaterial realm. Objects which are contradictory and heteronymous to one another here are all one in the Hereafter. This is because the closer objects are to the realm of unity, the more capacity they have. Based on this perspective, the mystics say that in Heaven, all the material

and intellectual pleasures are consolidated. For instance, a drop of water in Heaven has all the pleasures perceivable by the different senses, from aural pleasures (like different types of music) to visual pleasures (like looking at beautiful faces, colours, and shapes) to physical pleasures (such as sexual pleasures), and so on. Unseen attributes and characters must be visible in the Hereafter since people will be resurrected with different simultaneous faces; so, for example, someone who looks like a pig could also look like a mouse and a dog on account of the fact that the capacity of existence there is much higher due to its closeness to the immaterial realm of unity.

The material world is a veiled realm of negligence. It drowns man in material negligence due to its limitations and the absence of the realities of other realms. After separation from the material realm and the departure from the natural world, the soul of man becomes aware of the intermediary realm and its lights, spirits, and pleasurable faces and becomes accustomed to them. But, before coming to this realm, the soul was already familiar with some of these faces. So, at this point, the soul becomes informed about Heaven and perfect faces, and spiritual pleasures increase.

In the immaterial realm, much more information is available than in the material world; therefore, secrets can be seen which could never have been revealed in this world. All the pleasures that the soul had tasted in the world are seen in their best and sweetest forms. In the immaterial realm, there are no calamities. There is no material torture, fatigue, or illness. In that realm which is pure and full of light and happiness, no darkness or impurity can be found; the soul perceives everything as unique and pure: pure knowledge, pure power, pure life; existence, beauty, majesty, perfection, success, honour, happiness, and harmony. This pure witnessing continues until the soul joins with the divine attributes and then becomes annihilated in the

divine realm. Once he becomes annihilated in the annihilation of his essence, he becomes eternal with the eternity of Allah which is far from any defect.[24]

Three Stages of Annihilation

The stations of annihilation are for the soul which is acquainted with the higher realm, but if the soul is better acquainted with the material realm, whatever the soul witnesses will be torture and pain. However much the soul tries, it will not be able to escape this state.

Although the Islamic revelation is meant for all human beings, not everyone is meant to follow the interior path. While some people live in submission to the divine according to the shariah and finally enter Heaven, others look for the divine in this world. Their love for God and inclination to meditate on the divine realities (*haqa'iq*) encourages them to seek the path of inwardness. The revelation also provides a path for these people who, through understanding the inner aspect of revelation, return to the presence of Allah and witness Him with gladness.

Having mentioned different layers of understanding of the revelation, in Chapter 2, Tabataba'i divides people into three categories. The first group consists of those who have detached themselves from the material realm by educating themselves and practicing the knowledge they possess; they have complete certainty of divine knowledge and are in love with Allah. The second group is of those that think they have certainty and belief, but they have not detached and freed themselves fully from the material realm. This group worships God out of love and sincerity, but only behind veils, and it worships due to its belief in the unseen. This

[24] See Chapter 2. See also the Holy Qur'an, 53:42 and 96:8.

group might be at the stage of complete knowledge but only partial practice. These are the ones whom Allah has referred to as the 'companions of the right hand' who have access to the exterior of religion but not the core or the interior. The third group – which includes most people – understands the correct fundamentals of religion and resurrection, but only partially practices religion on account of its attachment to this world and obedience to its desires. Their love for this world has caused their actions to revolve around the world. So, they have been left behind from the true reality and knowledge and only practice some external deeds without knowing the value and meaning of their actions. They cannot comprehend the essence of religion. This group has not been able to attain or understand the essence and inner aspect of the world. Since these people are so busy with the material world, they are only aware of the outer aspect and exterior of religion. The outer aspect of the world is nothing but delusion. Had they grasped the message of revelation and followed it, this group would have realised the essence of the world and, from there, would have gradually understood the core of religion.

The Status of *Walayah*

Following his elaboration on interiority and exteriority and its aspects and consequences, in Chapter 3, Tabataba'i moves on to one of the main points of his book and says that the Messengers, Imams, and saints (*awliya'*) have access to the reality and essence of religion. They can be informed about some hidden secrets and attain the highest stages of closeness to the divine in a way that they witness the divine realm. The question is: is this status exclusive to the Messengers and the Imams and Ahl al-Bayt, or can others, such as saints reach this stage?

'Allamah believes that anyone who struggles and purifies himself can reach the highest stages of closeness to the

divine. To prove this, he refers to what he has said in the previous two chapters: the relation of the material realm to the immaterial realm is the relationship between cause and effect and is the relation between perfection and imperfection. He has also referred to this as the relation of the exterior to interior, the two modes of reality. If a person works on himself and struggles against his bodily desires to keep away from one mode of reality (namely, the material aspect with its external limitations), he will be able to witness the other mode of reality.

It can be said that the material world is caused by the higher realm, which is 'the intermediate realm of this world and the next world' (*'alam al-mithal*). If we wanted to go from this material realm to the higher stages, we would pass through the *'alam al-mithal* in an ascending arch. It is demonstrated that the perfection of effects exists at the level of cause; otherwise, the cause cannot bring about the effect. Thus, the *'alam al-mithal* also currently exists within you and I. This realm, as a manifestation of the higher realms, is always subsistent in those higher realms. Or, in other words, the exterior is the theophany and is subsistent in the interior as the effect subsists by the cause.

What is seen is subsistent in something through which it has been manifested, that is, it is unseen. Even if it is unseen, it is still apparent, and we are only ignorant of it because of our immense attention to the exterior, not because it does not exist. For example when, we write something, the writing is the effect. If we stop writing for a moment, there will not be anything written. The writing is the manifestation of the writer which becomes apparent through the writer. Therefore, if we predicate existence on the writer and writing, its predication on the writer is a primary and real predication, and the predication of existence on the writing is at the second level. Mulla Sadra has referred to this as the 'real existent' and 'intangible existent' (*haqiqah wa raqiqah*). So, in our example, the

predicate of the existent in writing – which is the effect – is the intangible existent and the real existent of the writer.

Applying existence to the caused is the predication of intangible reality (*haml bi al-raqiqah*), and applying existence to the cause is the predication of the real existent. Based on this, applying the concept of 'realisation' (*tahaqquq*) on the material realm is the predication of an intangible existent; the predication of this term on the higher realm (which is more intense existence) is the predication of the real existent. This does not mean that the lower level does not exist. The writing does exist, but its whole existence and reality is due to the existence of writer; its existence is a type of 'belonging' (*ta'alluq*) in that its totality depends on the writer.

If someone detaches himself from the material realm and frees himself from material limitations, he will be able to pass through witnessing intangible existence to witnessing a real and more intense existence – in other words, from the exterior to interior because, as it is said, the exterior is a mode of the interior. The secret of this point is that the manifestation of existents at the exterior level is limited to the limitation of its level. If man breaks through this stage with his spiritual struggle, he will definitely be able to see the reality of the world.

Going back to the psychological principle we discussed earlier, the soul and the body are two aspects of one single existent which, at the beginning of its creation, comes to the world in its material existence and, with its substantial movement, moves towards immaterial existence. So, a single entity shows different manifestations from the lowest stage of the body to the highest stage of the spirit. Having accepted the unity of body and soul, Tabataba'i says that when man looks at his bodily form, he sees himself as a consuming body and a physical existence and is ignorant of his spiritual existence, which he views as separate. When this happens, the soul will stay at the bodily state and

neglect its high spiritual status. Each person reaches higher stages by reaching the higher imaginary realm which is the reality of human existence. So, when the 'I' detaches from the physical state of the 'body', no veils will remain between him and the reality of human existence. If, through acquiring beneficial knowledge and performing good deeds and moral virtues, someone returns to his reality, he surely will be able to witness the reality of the soul. The reality of the world and some hidden secrets will also be shown to him.

The Destination of the Human Soul

In the fourth chapter, Tabataba'i explains that the final achievement of the human being in the Hereafter is witnessing Allah. He says this station is also possible for every person who achieves the station of *walayah* and the station of realising the hidden secrets of other realms in this and in the next world. Tabataba'i calls this position *fana'*. Although we do not have an English (or even Arabic) term that is exactly equivalent for the position which we define here as 'being in Being', we use the term 'annihilation' for that. What does *fana'* really mean for 'Allamah Tabataba'i?

According to Tabataba'i, the reality and perfection of any existence is its appearance in the absolute mode and freedom from any conditions and limitations. Existence – which is limited to material qualities and quantities – is only a manifestation and an intangible existent of the reality of an object. The same applies to humans; the reality of man is his soul because it has fewer limitations than the human body. The body is the exterior manifestation of the reality of man – meaning that, in this material realm, because of its limitations, the human soul is manifested in material form. In his philosophy, Mulla Sadra proved this concept using the principle of the human soul being

material in its advent but spiritual in its survival. By freeing itself from material and bodily attachments, the human soul moves towards the immaterial realm. The more the soul is detached from the body, the more man can witness Allah and be in His presence.

In other words, the movement towards perfection can be defined as the 'movement from the exterior to the interior', from 'materiality to immateriality', from 'restriction to absoluteness' and from the world of *i'tibariyyat* to the world of realities. The physical body – as the exterior of the human soul – is a lesser existence compared to the soul's existence; therefore, in opposition to the common definition and understanding, this body does not empower man but rather limits the human soul. For example, the eyes are not for 'seeing'. They are for 'not seeing' in the sense that they were designed to limit the sight of the soul to a specific place and distance; otherwise, the soul without the bodily eyes could see everything and everywhere. The physical senses limit the soul to a specific time, space, and a particular situation.

Based on this, the interior of any existence consists of objects without any external limitations or conditions. If the bodily limits and attachments of the human soul decrease, its spiritual manifestations increase. Thus it can be said if any existent wants to reach the actual higher stage of its existential perfection, it has to become annihilated in its present level and move on to a higher inner level. Any interior has still another interior, so the annihilation of an existent means the annihilation of the exterior in the interior and the annihilation of the interior in the reality of that interior until it becomes annihilated in the essence of the true and real existence (namely, Allah). So, in the first stage, the real perfection of man is detachment from the body. In the next stage, it is detachment from the soul. Finally, it becomes absolute and free from all limitations and conditions and reaches the station of annihilation in

Allah in three stages which will be explained in the following pages.

'Allamah uses philosophical psychology to argue for the concept of 'annihilation', a concept presented by him only in *The Return to Being*. Tabataba'i believes that the station of annihilation is a gift from the divine. Based on what has been said, he concludes that the witnessing of realities depends on witnessing the soul and self-knowledge. He lists many traditions from the Imams saying that our spiritual goal is best attained through self-knowledge, turning away from all the exterior layers of man, and giving total attention to the Real Existence.

As can be seen, the above-mentioned discussion contains mystical and divine secrets understandable by the inner heart and the inner sense. Tabataba'i, in different places in *The Return to Being*, maintains that it is not possible to understand such delicate issues without self-purification, refinement, and cultivation. He emphasises in order to understand the reality of different stages of existence and to recognise the strengths and intensities of each of these stages, we need to equip the self with theoretical and practical knowledge and understanding the self.

In Chapter 4, Tabataba'i suggests some theoretical and practical principles to the readers to attain such stages. The human being cannot comprehend the essence of reality unless, when he sees the soul, he also sees his sustainer (namely, Allah). This is the best way for wayfarers, His lovers, and saints (*awliya'*) to witness His beauty and majesty. To attain such a stage, one needs to realise his poverty and weakness. If he realises how weak he is, he will not rely on himself. When man sees his absolute poverty and understands the reality of his absolute dependence, he realises that Allah is absolutely free of need. As an essence not free of need, he finds that 'indigence' (*faqr*) is in itself not 'an essence' which is 'in indigence'. This means that indigence is not an adjective of his being. It is the essence

and constitution of his being. Man is existentially in need of his creator. If he is in need of his creator for the totality of his essence, it necessitates that he is not independent in some aspect of his reality (as he is not).

When man perceives his essence like this, he also sees his actions, which are the effect of his essence, annihilated in what his essence is annihilated in. It is clear that sins, inappropriate deeds, and evil actions are the effects of imperfection and deficiency. They do not require a cause *primo et per se*, so they are not attributed to Allah. In this way, any good action which is performed by the doer is annihilated in Allah's actions, and this is the basis of unity in divine acts. When man reaches the stage of unity in the divine essence, attributes, and actions, he will have certainty that the world is under command of the kingdom of the Lord of the worlds. He himself, his attributes, and his actions are radiations of the essence, attributes, and actions of Allah. He sees other creatures as the same as well. When he sees that all his and others' actions are annihilated in the actions of Allah, he will neither rely on himself nor on others. This status gives man self-confidence, self-reliance, and spiritual comfort in such a way that he will be free from any deficiency and will reach the level of trust and reliance on the Truth.

This stage of belief is the stage at which man reaches the reality of the world and religion. Perfection at this stage means that man sees the reality of realities until he does not see anything as independent or separate from the Absolute Existence. He will see all essences and existences annihilated in the pure existence and absolute essence, because the existence of Allah is unlimited and cannot be compared to other limited existents, whether large or small.

Annihilation in the divine essence does not mean that man destroys himself and become non-existent. Non-existence is deficiency, not perfection. In contrast, the highest stage of the human being's *walayah* means that a

person does not see any other essence apart from Allah – neither the self, nor one's attributes, actions, spirituality, or even sincerity. For Tabataba'i, a true *'arif* is a complete monotheist who does not even look at his own spirituality. For the *'arif*, Allah is 'the Known' (*ma'ruf*), and no one else is better witnessed than Him. With careful consideration, we can see that this refers to joining the infinite ocean of existence, not becoming non-existent.

In Chapter 5, Tabataba'i elaborates on the process and stages of the soul's perfection. He starts by saying that it is impossible for man to reach any station of perfection unless he is annihilated in that station and survives in the perfection of the stage to which he moves on. For Tabataba'i, this means that the lower stages are paths towards the higher stages, until the human soul reaches the highest stage of its *fana'*, or the drowning of the limited ego in the sea of divine reality.

This delicate psychological model of existential perfection is based on the Sadrian principles of the gradation of the realities of existence and the substantial transformation of the human soul from its bodily advent into a purely spiritual entity. According to this principle, the same human soul is a dynamic inner force behind all these developmental processes. It is in its vegetal stage when the human being is still only a fertilised cell; then it passes through the animal stages, which in turn eventually culminate in the stage of adulthood, where the rational faculty is capable of beginning to achieve its higher spiritual and noetic actualisation.[25] From that larger developmental perspective, the human soul can become purified and realise its actualities only as it is existentially provided with the full range of its faculties.

In spite of the variety of the human being's faculties

[25] For more details on these stages, see also *Asfar*, vol. 2, p. 223-43.

(vegetal, animal, and rational), they join together, emerge as a composite unit, and become the source of all human activities and actions. The final outcome of such a composition is the human being's distinctive individual felicity and happiness, which is attainable whenever these faculties develop in their properly balanced middle courses. The deviation of any of these faculties from the middle path either to the right or the left (*al-khuruj min al-i'tidal*), or to states of either excess or deficiency, will disturb the proper balance of that particular ingredient, which will result in changing the entire nature of the composite unit.

The actual dynamic faculties are understood as the 'modes' (*shu'un*) or 'manifestations' (*zuhurat*) of the soul. As demonstrated in transcendent philosophy, this subtle point is based on the fundamental well-known principle: 'The human soul in its own oneness is all of the faculties.'[26] When the soul, which is an existential unit in all experience, achieves its highest form through its substantial transformation, it contains all the lower faculties and forms within its simple nature. This idea leads Tabataba'i to say that the human soul is capable of annihilating itself in its existence and existing at the higher level with a more intense reality.

Depending on the nature of human actions, whether good or bad the human soul can become more perfect in both directions – that is, either in animality or in true humanity – and the substance of the human soul, which is always 'becoming', in accordance with the principle of the transformation of its substance, can accelerate its perfection or the contrary through the inclination of the self. According to this principle, the more the human soul creates (acts) and actually realises the higher spiritual, immaterial forms, the greater its intrinsic 'intensity' or

[26] See *Asfar*, vol. 8, p. 221.

'degree' of existence. Increasing its intensity of existence is dependent on detaching itself (*tajarrud*) from earthly matter and realising other aspects of the exterior life. Once the human has achieved that eventual state of immateriality and detachment from worldly matter, it eventually becomes manifest as a fully developed form of its own particular kind (whether as a human being, or as an animal, in the case of imperfect and sub-human states of realisation), and it no longer needs any particular ties to the material world.

Attributes of the *Awliya'*

Tabataba'i says that there are secrets between the perfect man who has achieved the stage of divinity and Allah. Those that have not reached that stage can never understand the position and attributes of the mystic (*'arif*) since the existence and attributes of such an individual are annihilated in Allah, and no science can encompass the divine affairs. For these people, it is sufficient honour and greatness that only Allah is their close friend, beloved, teacher and Lord. Nevertheless, some Qur'anic verses and traditions talk about the attributes and signs of this group. Having made this point, 'Allamah presents some traditions in which they are described as having 'God-awareness' (*taqwa*). God-awareness means keeping away from actions which displease Allah. In *Al-Mizan*, Tabataba'i says that according to the verse 'Those who believe and constantly guard against sins' (10:63), cleansing the soul and abstinence from bodily inclinations and sin are stages before reaching God-awareness. But if we say that faith comes after God-awareness, the belief which is mentioned in this verse is that of the special servants of Allah, not ordinary belief.[27]

Therefore, true faith is not separate from God-awareness.

[27] *Al-Mizan*, vol. 10, p. 130.

Indeed, true faith is submitting to the commands of the Holy Prophet. Submitting to someone means annihilating one's will and desires in the other. So the true believer does not will or want anything apart from what He wants. One who reaches this high status becomes annihilated in the light of the divine, and at this stage wherever one looks, one sees the 'Face of Allah' (*wajh Allah*). At this level, all the veils are removed from his eyes, because there is nothing left 'from him' or 'with him' apart from the Face of the majestic and honoured Allah. Allah has promised His proximity to these people, and they are called 'those who are of a near station to Allah' (*muqarrabun*).

On the other hand, the friends of Allah are the ones who spend greatly in His path. These groups of people are true believers, whose perfection has been reached through divine knowledge and good deeds for His sake, and they precede others in doing any good (*khayrat*). In return, Allah has promised that He will remove the veils from their hearts, show them the unseen realm, and raise them to the state of certainty (*maqam al-yaqin*).[28] Allah has promised that He will change the hearts and will place ease and comfort in the lives of those who reach this state of proximity to Him. Their lives are full of light by which they interact with others, and by these interactions, they increase their closeness to Allah. Engagement with worldly affairs and interaction with people does not stop them from constant remembrance of Allah. They have the status of unity in multiplicity and multiplicity in unity; dealing with others and being involved in the multiplicity of life does not obstruct them from their devotion to the realm of His Unity.

Their involvement with temporary material pleasures does not distance them from spiritual and intellectual

[28] See *Al-Mizan* under commentary of verses 102:5-7 & 83:14.

pleasures, nor does it take away the pleasure they experience when they are in proximity to Allah. They see multiplicities and servitude to people as the exterior of a higher reality which is the essence and interior of those realities. They go from the exterior to the interior and also benefit from the perfections of the exterior, but do not stop there. These are the people whom Allah has guided through His light, the light which is truly above all lights, so no light of lower perfection in the material realm distracts their attention from Allah who is the reality of realities.[29]

Allah describes His close servants as those people who are never negligent of His remembrance and good actions; these are people who are not prevented from remembering Allah by any obstacle or veil. They do not pay attention to anything other than Him; hence, they have become purified for His sake. Due to His mercy to His close servants, Allah annihilates them in their actions, attributes and essences. So the first aspects which are annihilated are their actions and deeds. They see death, life, health, illness, wealth and poverty as all from Allah. To prove this point, 'Allamah mentions a tradition from Imam al-Sadiq (A). In commentary of the verse 'Then when they displeased Us, We inflicted retribution on them, so We drowned them all together' (43:55), the Imam attributes God's actions like anger to His selected people on the earth.[30]

[29] See the Holy Qur'an, 24:35.

[30] Tabataba'i at this point brings a famous *hadith*, in which the Imam explains emanation of God's actions in the corporeal realm through human beings and emotions. He says: 'Allah does not become angry like us. He has created friends for Himself who become angry or happy. They are the friends, the creation of Allah, through whom He manages the affairs of this world. Their satisfaction and anger is Allah's satisfaction and anger...' (Muhammad ibn Ya'qub al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi*, ed. Muhammad

After their actions are annihilated, Allah annihilates their attributes, such as life, knowledge, power (strength), hearing, and sight. When these attributes are annihilated, Allah acts for them.[31] Reaching this station will grant the person a light in his heart by which he interacts with people whilst this very same person, before reaching this station, would have lived with his external senses, such as his ears, eyes, hands and tongue. By reaching this high interior station and proximity to Allah, those external senses are changed to a light given by Allah.

The next stage is annihilation of the essence. Allah annihilates their essence and makes their reputation and names disappear; He Himself will be present at their station. The perfections and properties of man will be found once again in the realm of the inner of all the inners. At that stage, there is nothing other than God to have any perfection. There is only the Sacred Essence (*dhat*) of the Supreme One. This is the realm of unity, so how can man go there and carry along his gatherings of multiplicities such as knowledge, gnosis, and expertise? As mentioned before, perfection and existence exclusively and entirely belong to God, and attributing the existence and any other perfections to any contingent existents in the realm of multiplicity is metaphorical (*majaz*), or in Sadrian language, intangible (*raqiqah*). The veil of negligence and illusion had blinded and prevented man from seeing The Real Existent (*Al-Haqq*, namely God). After lifting the veil, it becomes clear that real perfection exclusively belongs to the Essence of the Truth, and ascribing it to others is utterly metaphorical. Perfection (for other beings) is to

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Khajavi, 2 volumes (Tehran: SIPRIn publications, 2004), vol. 1, p. 144.

[31] Here 'Allamah narrates a famous sacred *hadith* from *Al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 352. In this *hadith*, Allah attributes the actions of His saints to Himself.

reach the status of annihilation in God, and this perfection has no aspect of plurality. All pluralities fade away, vanish, and become annihilated, and perfection belongs absolutely and exclusively to the Essence of the One and no one else. Upon annihilation, no distance or cover will be left. All veils will be wiped out, even the veil of 'I-ness' (*ana'iyyah*). This does not mean that man is completely abolished due to annihilation, nothing of him remains, and he is going toward sheer non-existence (*'adam*), because the wayfarer can feel that his existence is going toward a more intense existence and not toward non-existence. Therefore the 'non-existence' at that stage is more 'existence' than all other existences, but they cannot arrive at the realm of *tawhid* and absolute unity with their multiplicity while they still keep their phenomenalisations (*ta'ayyunat*) and individualisations (*tashshakhusat*). Although the annihilated wayfarer (*fani fi Allah*) is in the realm of unity and Divine Dominion (*malakut*), his heart is still open to the realm of bodily faculties in order to be aware of people's worldly requirements and needs. Through his perfect soul, he orders the sensibles to be in accord with the intelligibles from which they derive, thus establishing the crucial link by which the lower is made to conform to the higher and ultimately with the principle itself.

The Prophet is a perfect example of the reconciliation of the material and spiritual dimensions and internal equilibrium and peace. As Tabataba'i maintains in this treatise, this rank is achievable for any person who can see beyond the world of the senses and imagination and reaches the world of intellect (although not, the level of prophecy). This is the stage of annihilation and the final stage of the spiritual journey, that is, being with the Truth while being among the people.

S. K. Toussi

THE RETURN TO BEING

The Treatise on Friendship with God

Preface

In the Name of God, the Merciful the Compassionate

Praised be God, the Lord of the worlds, and all greetings and blessings be upon His intimate friends, especially our master Muhammad and his pure Household.

This is *The Treatise on Friendship with God* (*Risalat al-Walayah*). Human perfection finds final fruition in this *walayah*, and the ultimate purpose of the true divine law – as rationally understood and indicated explicitly in religious discourses – is to reach this *walayah*.[1]

[1] Considering the theme of this treatise, we spelled this term '*walayah*' not '*wilayah*'. When Islamic scholars mention these two concepts, they distinguish between *wilayah* and *walayah*, which are distinguishable in Arabic only when the vowels are indicated. The word *walaya*, from the root *w-l-y*, means 'proximity' or 'contiguity'. This root gives rise to *walayah*, meaning 'to be a friend', which the noun '*walī*' is derived from; and *wilayah*, meaning 'to direct, to govern, or to take charge', which the noun '*wālī*' is derived from. From a linguistic point of view, the *fi'ālah* pattern (*wazn*) on which the word *wilayah* is constructed is normally used to express the execution of a function. Thus, *khilafah* signifies the function of a caliph and *imarah* the function of a leader; similarly, *wilayah*, in political and administrative terminology, signifies the function of a *wālī*, a governor and, by extension, his realm of competence. The *fa'ālah* pattern on which *walayah* is modelled expresses a *state of being*, and would thus appear to be a more adequate basis for the term denoting the nature of a *walī*, that which makes him what he is.

In order to demonstrate the political authority of the Imams, Shi'a scholars like Shaykh Tusi (d. 460 AH) Najm al-Din Hilli (d. 726 AH), Ahmad Naraqi (d. 1245 AH), and Muhammad Husayn Kashif al-

This treatise has been written in a few chapters, and we seek the assistance of God, the Glorified, in this work.

Ghita' (d. 1373 AH), usually establish a categorical distinction between the two above-mentioned meanings. This view brought about opposition between Sunni and Shi'a interpretations of the concept of *wali* in the traditions narrated from the Prophet in favour of the *wilayah* (protection and political powers) of Imam 'Ali and eleven other Imams. According to the Shi'a, the powers with which a *wālī* is invested, and also the essential characteristics from which such powers actually arise, are important. Ayatollah Khomeini (who promoted a new model of the political authority of the jurist during the occultation of the infallible Imam) was the most important Shi'a jurist and philosopher to reconcile the mystical and political interpretations of *wilayah* and *walayah*. According to Khomeini, the perfect man is the real instance of both of the concepts of *walī* and *wālī*. The perfect man is a manifestation of God's names, and the two nouns are two names of God. Hence the word *wilayah* and the word *walayah* are often used with one meaning in Khomeini's works, although there is some semantic difference between the two words as early jurists and mystics maintained. (For more details about his philosophical ideas on this issue see Ruhollah Khomeini, *Misbah al-Hidayah* (Tehran: n.p., 1360 AH).) In the treatise which follows, Tabataba'i examines this concept from a completely mystical approach. According to Tabataba'i, every human being has the potential to achieve a stage of being at which he will be able to annihilate in the highest perfect being. (In order to distinguish our annotations from the author's own notes, we hereafter sign annotations with 'SKT' to stand for S. K. Toussi.)

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The Exterior of this Religion has an Interior: Its True Form Contains Truths

Beings can be divided into two groups. Every perceived meaning has a corresponding entity. Either its corresponding entity exists in the external world independently, whether it is intelligent or not (such as material substances like minerals, plants and animals), or else its corresponding entity exists in the external world because of an intelligent being, and it would not exist were it not for an intelligence. An example is ownership, as we do not see any concrete thing in the external world that may be called ownership other than the substance of the owned thing and the owner (such as a piece of land and a man). Rather, this concept depends on intelligence without which there would be no ownership, owner or owned object, and there would be only man and land. So the first meaning [which relates to external realities] is called the real meaning, and the second [which is invented by the mind and somehow abstracted from objective realities] is called the abstract or conceptual invention (*i'tibari*) meaning. And we have proved already in *Kitab al-I'tibariyyat* (*The Book of Conceptual Inventions*)[1] that every conceptual invention is

[1] The author means Chapter 6 of *Usul-i Falsafih va Ravish-i Rializm.* [SKT]

dependent on a real one.[2]

On the other hand, if we probe further, we see that all those meanings related to man and all the relations that exist among these meanings – such as ownership, leadership, manner and all that belongs to it – are conceptual inventions with metaphorical meanings which man had to invent because of his essential need for social life and civilisation, so that he could gain what is good and beneficial and avoid what is evil and harmful. Just as a plant survives through a cycle of nourishment, growth, and procreation in a chain of existential and ontological laws, man also survives through a natural system of external existence. However, the system itself is linked by metaphorical meanings and conceptual inventions. Although they are founded on a natural system, a conceptual invention system links them. While man appears to live in the external world under the conceptual invention system, he really lives in the internal world under the natural system.[3]

[2] 'Dependence on the real one' means that conceptual inventions are rooted in natural laws and ontological principles, because human beings live under natural-ontological laws, so these concepts are constructed based on a special relation among the real phenomena. Basically, the human mind cannot invent these concepts on its own, because humans live in the real and concrete world not in the subjective and abstract realm. Given this philosophical idea, Tabataba'i, in his chapter on *i'tibariyyat* in *Usul-i Falsafih* attempts to link ethical 'ought-tos' to human nature and its objective natural requirements. See footnote no. 2 in the Introduction. [SKT]

[3] By the 'external world', Tabataba'i here means religious concepts and knowledge. Religious concepts are expressed with metaphoric language because they have descended to the realm of matter with all its worldly requirements. In the material realm, human beings need to live in society. Based on common benefits and worldly necessities, they need to invent concepts such as 'ownership', 'marriage', and all the other concepts related to human rights and social justice which

In general, this system of mutually agreed-upon conventions exists in society and civilisation. Where there is no society, there is no convention, and vice versa.

Moreover, contemplation reveals that all knowledge that religion has explained and discussed concerning the origin and precepts of the Hereafter is expressed by the language of *i'tibariyyat*. As issues related to social life and cooperative activities occur only in society, they are stated in conventional language. There are other truths which, like the precepts, have been explained in this language. In short, all that comes prior to this social life and precedes the existence of the social man (and what man will experience following this social life after death, where there will be no civil society) has no connection with these conventional meanings. The knowledge that is related to and is explained by religion, like the level of the precepts, speaks of other truths in conventional language, for the divine religion presents otherworldly matters in the form of precepts and practices which are truly related to them, and the true relationship between two things unites them in the mode of existence, as was argued in other places.[4] On the other hand,

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Tabataba'i calls *i'tibariyyat*. However, although people externally live under these concepts, they internally live under the natural laws of creation. This means that although the human mind constructs these concepts, they are not merely of those concepts that have no objective sources, because as long as the conceptual faculties of man did not make an existential connection with the outside world and nature, man would not be able to create a metaphorical and practical image from it. [SKT]

[4] As there is no social life in the realms before and after the material realm, there is no 'conceptual invention'. A single reality manifests differently in these three realms. Religious realities like prayer have a reality in this world which is formed by certain bodily actions with certain conditions, but the same action has another mode of reality in the next world. Certainly our prayer in the next world, where there is no body, manifests itself in another mode

since those things are true external issues, the relations must be between them and the truths that exist beneath these conventional issues rather than among themselves. Therefore, it becomes clear that there is an interior for the exterior of this religion, which is our intended point.[5]

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which is 'more real' than its bodily manifestation. All that has been descended to us from the other realm – including religious knowledge and principles – must be manifested in a mode appropriate to this world. In other words, God makes use of the language of *i'tibariyyat* to express the reality of the higher realm. Since the previous and next realms are governed by the real rules of creation, those realms do not need worldly regulations, and so *i'tibariyyat* are limited to this realm. However, this does not mean that the entities in the material realm, the previous realm, and the next realm have a different existence. This but means that a single reality has different grades of existence. This philosophical doctrine is based on the principle of 'gradational reality of existence' (*tashkik al-wujud*). Based on this principle, existents are not fixed in a reality limited to any particular level of existence. They are a flowing spectrum, which manifests in the lowest and the highest, in the material and in the pure immaterial realm. [SKT]

[5] A single reality manifests in different hierarchal levels and degrees of existence. The higher level differs from the lowest one in terms of intensity and weakness. The relation between the levels is causal, so the higher level with the more intense portion of existence is the cause, and the lower one is the caused. The causal existential relation between the levels means that the lower level as an effect has no reality other than reliance and dependence and has no meaning other than being an effect and subordinate. Tabataba'i applies the terms 'exterior' and 'interior' to the lower and higher levels. The higher level is the inner, and the lower level is the exterior and bodily manifestation of the higher one. In the material realm, as the lowest level of existence, nature, art and divine law (including religious precepts) in their own turn possess an interior dimension as well as an exterior dimension. As dependent realities, they also mirror realities which are at once inward, real and transcendent. Tabataba'i maintains that religion talks with worldly language. This language is called *i'tibariyyat* which can express the religious realities in this world. In other words, a reality manifests in this world and in the

Supplementary Notes: Evidence from the Holy Qur'an and Hadith

Both the Holy Qur'an and Hadith relate that some knowledge and secrets are veiled to the average human being and known only to God (mighty is His Name) and those whom He wills, likes, and is satisfied with. The Divine Book abounds with these secrets, and it suffices to mention His words: 'And the life of the world is nothing but a sport and a play; and as for the next abode, that most surely is the life – did they but know!' (29:64) That is, the true and real life is the life in the Hereafter, for God the Glorified counts the life of this world as a play and diversion and restricts the real life to life in the other world, either by excluding other forms of life [as real life] or negating the conception of those who have a wrong impression of this world, as for example, God confirms: 'They know just the outward aspects of the life of the world, but they are oblivious to the Hereafter' (30:7). This verse indicates that the life of this world has another aspect different from its exterior aspect, which is indeed the Hereafter; but people are heedless of it, as one would say to his friend, 'You have literally understood what I said, but you are oblivious to the deeper meaning'. In this example, what was ignored was the interior of the speech which held the deeper meaning. This is also indicated in the speech of God:

> Avoid those who turn away from Our remembrance and desire nothing but the life of the world. That is the ultimate reach of their knowledge. Indeed your Lord knows best those who stray from His way, and

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previous and next worlds with a different manifestation: one is interior and the other is exterior; one is *i'tibari* and the other is real and ontic; one is weak and the other is intense. (For more clarification see the Introduction). [SKT]

He knows best those who are rightly guided. (53:29-30)

It is understood from these verses that remembering God the Exalted is the only way to come to Him, leaving Him is turning away from His path, and He is remembered only by turning away from the life of this world. Moreover, those who refrain from remembering Him know merely this worldly life and have no knowledge of that which is gained through remembrance.

Therefore, there must be something other than the life of this world in a hierarchical chain,[6] which one may know; or one may be limited to the life of this world. More explanation shall come at the end of these chapters, with the help of the Almighty God.

Some of the *hadiths* addressing this subject are mentioned in *Bihar al-Anwar* and are cited from *Al-Mahasin*.[7,8] It is narrated that the Messenger of God (S) has said: 'We prophets speak to people according to the extent of their intellects.'[9] This statement only makes sense if there are some things which listeners could not understand. Moreover, in the *hadith*, the Prophet says 'speak' rather than 'say', 'explain', or 'mention', and this indicates that the sort

[6] The author refers to a proof for the existence of higher levels of existence, namely, the immaterial realms with their stages. This proof is called '*qa'idat imkan al-ashraf*'. [SKT]

[7] *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 1, p. 106, no. 4; Ahmad al-Barqi, *Al-Mahasin*, vol. 1, p. 310, no. 17.

[8] In the past Islamic scholars, including the author of *The Return to Being*, have not typically listed publication information for the references they have cited; rather, they confined themselves to citing titles of works and page numbers only. References cited by 'Allamah Tabataba'i herein have not been expanded but it can be assumed that he would have used first editions and perhaps lithographs. For the Arabic text of the *hadiths* cited by Tabataba'i see the Appendix. [SKT]

[9] *Al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 23; Al-Saduq, *Al-Amali*, p. 504; *Tuhaf al-'Uqul*, p. 37; *Mishkat al-Anwar*, p. 439; *Awali al-Liyali*, vol. 2, p. 103.

of knowledge explained by the prophets is tailored to the understanding of their people mainly to render the difficult easy, rather than to confine their abundant knowledge to a few issues, to cater to common understandings, or to focus on a few instead of all people.[10] In other words, this statement concerns quality rather than quantity and shows that the reality of prophetic knowledge is beyond the intellect which gains knowledge through demonstration, dialectic and rhetoric, although the prophets have explained everything in the best way possible using all intellectual methods, such as demonstration, reasoning, and preaching, and have expounded their teachings in all possible ways.

Having said that, we may conclude that prophetic knowledge is at a higher rank than verbal expression. If this knowledge descends to the level of expression, it will be rejected by common intelligences, either because it is contrary to what they know as necessary, or it is different from what was explained to them and they have understood. From this, it is clear that conceptual perception alone does not suffice to comprehend prophetic

[10] Numerous *hadiths* from the Twelver Shi'a Imams discuss very delicate metaphysical issues. Although they do not employ philosophical terms in their discussions, these *hadiths* cover most controversial philosophical issues such as existence of God, His attributes, His relation to the human being, metaphysical realities including intellects and angels, eschatological topics, the human soul, and the human origin and end. This means that not only did they not dislike metaphysical and philosophical discussions, but also they practically invited the people to think about and discuss these questions. They also explicitly introduced thinking and contemplation as prerequisites for spirituality and for achieving happiness. They referred to metaphysical knowledge as holy knowledge which assists the human soul to perfect and improve. [SKT]

knowledge."[11]

Another frequently occurring, well-known *hadith* from Imam al-Baqir (A) is: 'Our speech is difficult and hard and is borne only by a near-stationed angel, a prophet sent by God, or a faithful servant whose heart God has tested for faith."[12] Another *hadith*, more directly related to our purpose, appears in *Al-Basa'ir*. It is related that Abu al-Samit has said:

> I heard Imam al-Sadiq (A) saying: 'Some of our speech cannot be borne even by a near-stationed angel, a prophet sent by God, or a faithful servant.' I then said: 'Who can bear it then?' He answered: 'We bear it.'

I reiterate that these and similar traditions recur, albeit some of them read: 'I said: "Who can bear it then?" He answered: "Whoever we want."'"[13]

It is also related in *Al-Basai'r* that Al-Mufaddal has narrated from Imam al-Baqir (A):

> Our speech is difficult and hard, burning and pure, and it cannot be borne even by a near-stationed angel, a prophet sent by God, or a servant whose heart God has tested for faith. The 'difficult' is the horse which is not yet broken, the 'hard' is that which is fled from once it is seen, and [it is] 'burning' for it inflames the believers, and 'pure,' for nothing can be added to its beginning or end. This is God's saying: 'God has sent

[11] This is another of the author's proofs for the necessity of these sorts of discussion and its permissibility in the view of the Imams. People habitually hold to their old religious beliefs and realities. One of the aims of the Imams was to correct people's wrong beliefs and to inform them of the true realities of the higher metaphysical realities and the next world, even if they had to explain these in a difficult language. [SKT]

[12] *Basa'ir al-Darajat*, p. 20, 25; *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 2, p. 189-192; *Al-Khisal*, p. 208; Al-Saduq, *Al-Amali*, p. 52; *Ma'ani al-Akhbar*, p. 189.

[13] *Basa'ir al-Darajat*, p. 23; *'Awalim al-'Ulum*, vol. 3, p. 506.

> down the best discourse' (39:23). For the best discourse is our discourse, and no one can bear it completely unless he defines it, for he who defines something is greater than that which is defined. Praised be God for His blessing, and denial is disbelief.[14]

His saying that it cannot be borne 'unless he defines it' – which denies any such possibility – indicates that their discourse has many levels, some of which may be borne through the act of definition. This is confirmed by the *hadith* related by Abu al-Samit in which Imam al-Baqir (A) says: 'Some of our speech cannot be borne even by a near-stationed angel...' In that case, the subject of these *hadiths* and that of the first *hadith* ('is borne only...') is one, for the discourse is graded and has different levels. It may also be akin to the generalisation in the Prophetic tradition related before: 'We prophets speak to people according to the extent of their intellects.'

Moreover, people define their discourse, for their retaining vessel – which is their essence – is limited, and, therefore, they are limited in what they retain, and this is why they cannot bear the discourse, which, in its perfection, is unlimited and beyond possibility. This is their station with God which is confined by no limit; it is the absolute friendship, which, with the help of the Almighty God, will be explained more in the final chapters.

There are some other traditions which confirm what has been said. One is in *Al-Basa'ir*, related from Murazim:

> Imam al-Sadiq (A) said: 'Our affair is true and is the truth of truth; it is the exterior and the interior of the exterior, and the interior of the interior; it is the secret, the secret of the secret, the secret that is kept

[14] *Basa'ir al-Darajat*, p. 44.

secret, and the secret veiled by secret."[15]

Another *hadith* relates that 'the Qur'an has an exterior and an interior, and its interior has seven interiors."[16] In yet another *hadith*, it is said: 'Its exterior is the decree, and its interior is knowledge."[17] In another narration on the questions of compulsion and free will, it is mentioned in *Tawhid al-Saduq* that Mahzam has said: 'I asked Imam al-Sadiq (A), "Which one is it?" He turned his hand thrice and said, "If I answer, you may become a disbeliever."'[18] Some verses ascribed to Imam al-Sajjad (A) read:

There is that essence of knowledge which if I disclose,

They would say to me, 'You are of those who worship the idols."[19]

Some of the traditions on the coming of the Saviour also state that Imam al-Mahdi (A) after his coming will spread the secrets of the religious law, and the Qur'an will confirm his teachings.[20] Moreover, in *Al-Basa'ir* it is related on the authority of Mas'adah ibn Sadaqah quoting Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (A) that his father has stated: 'One day I spoke of dissimulation (*taqiyyah*) in the presence of Imam 'Ali ibn al-Husayn (A). Then the Imam said: 'By God! If Abu Dharr knew what was in Salman's heart, he would have killed him, whereas the Messenger of God (S) had made

[15] *Basa'ir al-Darajat*, p. 49; *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 2, p. 71; *'Awalim al-'Ulum*, vol. 3, p. 314.

[16] *Al-Safi*, vol. 1, p. 31, 59.

[17] *Al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 599; Rawandi, *Al-Nawadir*, p. 144; Mazandarani, *Sharh Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 6, p. 10; *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 70, p. 137; *Qawanin al-Usul*, p. 407.

[18] Al-Saduq, *Tawhid al-Saduq*, p. 363; *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 5, p. 53.

[19] *Tarikh Baghdad*, vol. 12, p. 487.

[20] Al-Tabarsi, *Al-Ihtijaj*, vol. 1, p. 360.

them brothers...'[21] It is also related that Imam al-Sadiq (A) 'transmitted some traditions to Jabir and then said, "If you disclose them, may the curse of God and the angels and all people be on you."'

It is also related in *Al-Basa'ir* that Al-Mufaddal has said:

> Jabir once complained to Imam al-Sadiq (A) of the anguish of his soul due to having to bear dissimulation. Then Imam al-Sadiq (A) ordered him to dig a hole and put his head into it and speak of what he has endured and then to fill it up, for the earth will keep his secret.

It is written in *Bihar al-Anwar*, quoted from a tradition from *Al-Ikhtisas* and *Al-Basa'ir*, that Jabir has said that Abu Ja'far (A) told him: 'O Jabir! What we have hidden from you is more than what we have disclosed to you.'[22]

I add that the *hadiths* which have been transmitted in different ways on this subject are more than could be counted. Moreover, some of the companions of the Prophet (S) and the Imams are counted among the holders of secrets, and they include Salman al-Farsi, 'Uways al-Qarani, Kumayl ibn Ziyad al-Nakha'i, Maytham al-Tammar al-Kufi, Rashid al-Hijri, and Jabir al-Jufi, may God be satisfied with all of them.

[21] *Basa'ir al-Darajat*, p. 25; *Bihar Al-Anwar*, vol. 2, p. 190; *'Awalim al-'Ulum*, vol. 3, p. 504.

[22] *Al-Ikhtisas*, p. 272; *Basa'ir Al-Darajat*, p. 396.

2

The Esoteric Nature of the Religious Law

As shown by intellectual arguments, cause and effect are like perfection and imperfection. They are like the body and its shadow, with the effect emanating from the cause just as the shadow emanates from the body. It has been elaborated that effect is inherently imperfect; therefore, this world is preceded by other existing worlds by way of causality, all the way back to the Exalted Real who is the First Cause. From this, we conclude that all the perfections of this world exist in the higher worlds in higher and more perfect forms, and this world's deficiencies are confined to this world and do not exist in the higher worlds. This is said in brief; to explain the full truth would be very difficult, if not impossible.[1]

But, to give an example, we may say that the perfections

[1] To clarify this delicate point, we can illustrate the existential relation of hierarchical levels to different grades of light. The intense light contains the lower levels of light, but it is not a compound of two lights as the weaker light is not a compound of light and darkness. It is just light with less intensity as the stronger light is light with more intensity. The cause includes the existential perfection of the effect in terms of intensity like light, so the effect benefits from less being, and it is not a compound of existence and non-existence. In the chain of causes and effects, the cause of all causes (that is, the Necessary Being) has the whole perfection of the lower levels within Its all-encompassing Unity. [SKT]

(or highest material joys) of this world – such as delicious food, enjoyable drink, beautiful faces, and the like – are transient. Not only are they brief, but they are surrounded by thousands of natural diseases, external impediments, and contingent damages, any one of which would be enough to destroy the joy of any of these perfections. So, joy itself and the person relishing it stand surrounded by thousands and thousands of threats and diseases, any one of which can destroy them.

Moreover, on deeper reflection, we find that all these imperfections and harms are caused directly or indirectly by matter – such as [natural and moral] evils in the material realm and illusionary defects – and where there is no matter, there are no defects. Therefore, imperfections are restricted to this world, and the higher world [the intermediary world or *'alam al-mithal*][2] is free from these defects, for it is made of immaterial forms and ideal joys that are imperishable.[3]

[2] Other names for this world are: the World of Subsistent Idea-Images, the Intermediate Supra-sensory World, the World of Archetypal Images, and the World of Immaterial Bodies. [Translator]

[3] As Tabataba'i mentioned earlier, this world has been created in such a way that phenomena operate within a network of relations and causal links that are necessary and inviolable. For Tabataba'i, this does not impose any constraints on God's power or wisdom because He has willed this particular world order in which, for instance, one cannot put the heavens in an egg. In this sense, incapacity (*'ajz*) is not to be attributed to God but to the incapacity of the egg. Therefore the creation of this level of being with all its limited capacities – which may cause some evils – is goodness, and its existence is better than its non-existence because by creation of the lowest level, the creation (or Allah's *fayd*) is completed. The complete creation should consist of all the levels of existence, from the lowest to the highest. Any evil in the lowest level of existence is related to incapacity of matter and the bodily substance rather than to the power of God. For instance, fire, which is one of the species belonging to this level of

On the other hand, if we look further, we see that even the limits of the intermediary world by themselves are defects, and the limited thing in itself enjoys a state that is void of limitation, for it is above its essence, as was demonstrated elsewhere. Therefore, there must be another world in which these pleasures and perfections have pure existence; that is, they have no limits, for each of the joys of eating, drinking, sex, hearing, and seeing (for example) has a place in the intermediary world that it cannot exceed in this world. One cannot, for example, experience the joy of sex in hearing or eating, or the perfection of eating in drinking, or the pleasure of this kind of food in another kind of food, and so on. This is due to the existential limits determined by the portion of existence, for the world that is higher than the intermediary world and contains no limitations has all these joys and perfections in a united, collective, universal, and absolute way. Of course, all of these concepts are founded on already established principles, which are known to the experts.[4]

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being, cannot be found in such a way that it leads to no evil. It is impossible to make fire other than what it is. Likewise, it is impossible that fire be fire and not burn the cloth of the hermit when it touches fire. [SKT]

[4] The established principles he refers to are ontological and are demonstrated in the transcendent philosophy of Mulla Sadra. According to the principle of 'primacy of existence over quiddity' (*asalat al-wujud*), existence is the source of all realities and effects, although its forms are different with respect to its quiddities, and although its categories and kinds are distinct with regard to essence and definition. It is a single entity with different stages from the lowest to the highest. The paradox of unity and multiplicity of existence can be explained by the 'gradation of existence' (*tashkik al-wujud*). According to this principle, the existents (*mawjudat*) are not considered separate entities that are self-subsistent; rather their existence is due to their illuminated relation with the 'absolute true existence'. The 'existence' is a unique reality which possesses different

What is mentioned above concerns the intermediary world which is before this material world [in a descending arc], but the same can be said about that which comes after the material world [in an ascending arc] – albeit, in the end, the intermediary world returns before the world of the pure intelligence; whereas, in the beginning, the intermediary world came after the world of pure intelligence.[5] There is another difference between the intermediary world at the beginning and in the return, and it pertains to the soul. The soul is constructed of the imaginal forms, and it acquires those forms by the permission of its Lord. But because the

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levels and stages based on degrees of intensity, weakness or strength, perfection and deficiency, priority and order, and so on. The lowest levels have more existential limitations, and so they require dimensions and multiplicity; the higher levels have more simplicity and unity. In other word, unity or simplicity (*bisatah*) benefits from more reality than multiplicity, meaning that it has less limitations and less of a lack of existence. This doctrine leads to another key principle: 'the real sheer and indivisible reality is all things' (*basit al-haqiqah kull al-ashya'*). The Necessary Being and Sheer Existence whom nothing surpasses in completeness, nor which has any kind of nullity, limitation, or imperfection, holds all the perfection of all the lower levels of existence within Its Unity. Based on this principle, Tabataba'i asserts that the limits of the material realm are greater than the intermediary world, so it has more defects and its enjoyments are not pure and perfect. They are mixed with evils and pains. The highest and real enjoyment is in the realm of intellect where the whole perfection of the lower levels manifests in unity and sheer existence. [SKT]

[5] The author refers to two ascending and descending arcs. The Necessary Existence (or God) is the beginning and the end of the arcs. The descending arc represents the gradation of existence from a more perfect and intense mode or grade of existence to a less perfect and intense state of existence in a direction to nothingness (*'adam*) or darkness. The ascending arc represents the transformation of existence from less perfect and intense existence to a more perfect and intense existence in the direction of Pure Existence. [SKT]

soul stays for some time in the material world (which is the illusory, conventional, and unreal world which the soul is attached to), it acquires some habits and states which may or may not be in harmony with its earlier world. For this world occupies the soul and veils it from other worlds, and so the habits it acquires may turn into veils so that it turns to earth and forgets God. Of course, the opposite can happen too, and its habits may cause it to turn away from the ornaments of this world and to abandon the commodities of this base world and limit its attachment to the bare necessities while it directs its attention and interest to the other world.

Indeed, once released from matter, the soul becomes aware of forms harmonious with its essence. These forms come from the imaginal and spiritual world of lights, in which it reposed in the past. Then it will enjoy 'repose and ease, and a Garden of Delight' (56:89) and, compared to its experience in the intermediary world in the plane of descending and beginning, it will experience much greater forms of perfection and spiritual joys.

And so what the soul knows in the absolutely immaterial world will be much greater than what it knows in the world of matter. It will observe imaginal lights, secrets, angels, and archetypal form of spirits in the intermediate world, and it will enjoy in an even higher degree all the pleasures it had experienced in the world of matter, such as food, drink, clothes, sexual intercourse, and all that can be heard and seen.[6] It will enjoy all those

[6] In the process of perfectional-substantial evolution of the human soul in an ascending arc, the higher level has the properties and perfections of the lower levels; therefore, the human being, who can rise above the material world and actualise his human potentialities, is much more perfect and comprehensive than when he was descending to this world. He is even more perfect than the entities which are purely rational, such as the angels, which have not

pleasures through the presence of the higher level in its vessel according to different levels of manifestation. It will also experience no physical or imaginal pain, nor will it be ill or tired when it is in the intermediary world.

On the other hand, if the soul is not veiled from the universals by its habits, it will sometimes experience the lights of the immaterial world, which in their glamour, grandeur, beauty, and perfection cannot be measured by the standards of the intermediary world nor compared with its forms. These observations may be repeated until the soul becomes completely able in that respect, and it becomes one of its stations. It will then ascend a degree higher to observe the world of the Names which is the absolute world in every respect and is pure radiance and magnificence. It will then see pure knowledge, pure power, pure life, pure existence,

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experienced all levels of existence. The purely immaterial entities (*'uqul al-mujarradah*) and the world of immateriality possess their own level of perfection and have no connection to the lower levels. The human being has two aspects of existence: earthly and heavenly existence, so he is between two powers: bodily desire and reason. If he follows his reason, he will achieve the realm of *malakut* and will be superior to pure material entities. If he follows his bodily desires, without the control of his higher level (that is, his reason), then he will sink to the lowest depths and will be lower than the animals. From another angle, man can achieve the highest level of divinity or the highest form of satanic powers because he is potentially 'a comprehensive being'. To be a comprehensive being that possesses the whole gamut of existential stations, man had no choice but to descend into the world of matter. By journeying through the world of nature and experiencing *the entire levels* of existence, man then continues his perfectional trajectory so that he might be worthy of the title of vicegerent of God (*khalifat Allah*). If man had not descended into this world, he would not have achieved the perfections that he deserves. Such a perfect entity after all his experience will partake in the highest, perfect, and purest enjoyments in the immaterial realms if he has passed through the right path. [SKT]

subsistence, radiance, magnificence, beauty, grandeur, perfection, happiness, might, felicity, and joy, until it joins the Names and Attributes, becomes one with the Exalted Essence, and disappears in His depth and is annihilated with the annihilation of the self and subsists with Exalted God's subsistence, Exalted is He and pure from any defect: 'And the final end is unto your Lord' (53:42), and 'Surely unto your Lord is the Return' (96:8). This will happen if its moral habits are pure and in agreement with the sacred world.

However, if its habits are incompatible with the sacred world and in harmony with the impurities of the material world, the opposite will happen, and all that it experiences will be pain and torment. Whenever it should try to quit a sorrow by the help of the origin of its essence, it will return to it because of its evil habits, and it will be told 'Taste the chastisement of burning' (3:181). Moreover, the paradise of the happy is not – as the common people imagine – only a garden, nor is the fire of the wretched only a pit of fire. Rather, they are huge, complete worlds which are incomparably bigger than this world.

From what is said, it is clear by now that there are two differences between the beginning and the return of the intermediary world. First, the intermediary world in the return is bigger than in the beginning, for the soul is bigger in the return due to the knowledge it acquires in the material world.[7] Second, unlike the beginning, the way in

[7] In spite of the varied nature of the human body, the human soul is one and is a simple entity which undergoes substantial changes, develops, and perfects throughout his life. This process makes the human soul more intense and bigger than before experiencing the material world. Knowledge has an essential role in developing the human soul. According to Tabataba'i, knowledge as an existential activity of the soul and as a mode (*sha'n*) of its existence entails the harmony between objective grades of intensity and the subjective

the return is divided into two ways: one way leading to happiness, joy, and Paradise; and another leading to wretchedness, pain, and Fire.[8] Of course, there is no contradiction between this and the predestined misery of the wretched and the Highest Pen. And know that some of these meanings are self-evident, and some others have been proved in their suitable place.

We may conclude that there is a relationship between the religious acts and practices and the promises and threats given by God the Exalted through His prophets, which will be further explained soon.

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realm, in the sense that the more intense one's being is, the more one knows through the direct experience of encompassing lower grades of existence (that is, the material realm). In its movement from the bodily stage, the human soul experiences material and higher realms and gradually becomes conscious of aspects of itself and other realities, divine knowledge, the inner aspects of the shariah and canonical religious rites, and so on. The human personality is shaped through acts of moral conduct creating the forms of action in the soul as well as through knowledge, whether good or bad. [SKT]

[8] This is due to the dual worldly and celestial nature of the human being, which distinguishes him from the angels. This two-fold nature of man is based upon the two-fold nature of the soul which has two doors: one opened to the world of divinity and the other opened to the cognitive and motive faculties. Insofar as it is opened to divinity, the soul is oriented towards the intellect, and insofar as it is opened to the lower faculties, it is oriented towards the passions. The human being is thus the unique creature in whom both the intellect and the passions are mounted, while in the angels there is only intellect, and in the animals there is only passion. This is why he is the one for whom there is a religious law, which orders the passions to be in accord with the intellect, and this is the main reason for his having a higher rank than other creatures, even higher than the angels. [SKT]

Supplementary Notes: Evidence from the Holy Qur'an and Hadith

If we look closely into the characteristics of the religious law of Islam and even all the divine religions, we find that the only aim of religion is to divert man's attention to that which is beyond the natural world. Although the different religions call people to God with their own insights in their own different ways, they all aim to direct people towards the Unseen.

Moreover, people are divided into three groups on the basis of the degree of their devotion to the Exalted God and their separation from creatures.

The first group consists of people with perfect aptitude who can sever their heart completely from this world and attain the necessary divine knowledge and devote themselves to the Exalted God. These are the ones who can witness all that exists beyond this material world and observe the divine lights; they include the prophets. This is the group of the near-stationed.

The second group are those who are perfect in their certainty but imperfect in their devotion, for they are attacked by selfish thoughts and defective convictions which terrify them into believing in the possibility of delivery and moving into a world beyond this material world. This group worships God as if they see Him; they worship Him in truth and not playfully, though they worship through a veil and believe in the Unseen. They are righteous in their deeds. The Messenger of God was asked about righteousness, and he answered: 'It is to worship God as if you see Him, and if you do not see Him, to recognise that He sees you.'[9] The difference between this group and the first one is that the first group *truly* sees God, whereas

[9] *Majma' al-Bayan*, vol. 2, p. 116; *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 70, p. 219; *Al-Safi*, vol. 1, p. 223.

the second group worships *as if* they see God.

The third group is composed of the common people. While this group (except for the hostile and the arrogant disbelievers) may have conviction in the true creeds concerning the Origin and the Resurrection and act according to these creeds, they do not believe in all details of them but, rather, in a general way. This is because they have clung to the earth, followed their base desires, and love this world. Love of this world and its ornaments easily occupies the heart and becomes the aim and purpose of man's actions; consequently, the soul may turn to this world and make the world its goal. It will then ignore what is beyond it – including the obligatory spiritual states and religious practices according to the true creeds. This, in turn, will render the true beliefs ineffective; and the religious practices merely superficial; and physical practices neither penetrating the heart nor having any active impact; this should be clear.

As an example, when we stand before a king, we experience a great change in our state; we feel a presence of the heart and humility and humbleness that we never experience in prayers when we attend the Lord of the kings. Moreover, when a king is watching us, we find in our souls that which we do not find even when we know God sees us and hears us, and He is nearer to us than our jugular vein. We also have complete trust in common tools which sometimes err, but do we trust Him the same way in our souls? This is despite the fact that we know all is in the hand of God the Exalted and that He does whatever He wishes and decrees as He desires. We trust so much in a man's promises or a piece of equipment, but we do not have a thousandth of such assurance in the promises of God the Exalted concerning life after death, Resurrection, and Judgment. Such contradictions are countless in our beliefs and practices, mainly because we are much more interested in this world, for the soul's dedication to worldly

purposes gives a stronger presence to its forms in the soul. Indeed, the world overwhelms the soul, erases one form, poses another, and turns down a form every moment to be replaced by another.[10] This in turn weakens the forms of the true principles and disciplines and consequently their effect in producing what is necessary in the soul; this is why it is said: 'The love of this world is the origin of all sins.'[11] This group's devotion to the Exalted God is confined to general beliefs and physical acts of worship that direct some attention to the Exalted God.

[10] According to the principle of the bodily advent of the human soul and its substantial movement, the human being is the totality of the soul and the body. These two, despite their diversity in way station, are two existent things that exist through one existence. It is as if the two are *one* thing possessing two sides. One of the sides is altering and extinguishing, and it is like the branch. The other side is fixed and subsistent, and it is like the root. The more the soul becomes perfect in its existence, the more the body becomes limpid and subtle. It becomes more intense in conjunction with the soul, and the unification between the two becomes stronger and more intense. All aspects of the human being including the bodily and intellectual faculties from the lowest level of the soul's existence to its highest are connected and constitute one single entity. All these levels are united in their multiplicity. Their unity is not of the type in which the end of one level is the beginning of another; rather, the whole perfection of the lower levels exists in the higher one. In transcendent philosophy, this issue is discussed under the title of '*al-nafs fi wahdatiha kull al-quwa*', meaning that since the soul in its unity is 'the totality of all the faculties', it operates as the chief active agent. All perfectional transformations from potentiality to actuality take place within the soul itself, and hence it is the source of all perfections (*kamalat*) and effects (*athar)*. In other words, faculties are merely the modes (*shu'un*) or manifestations (*mazahir*) of the soul. (For more details, see *Asfar*, vol. 5, p.14.) [SKT]

[11] *Awali al-Liyali*, vol. 1, p. 27; *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 51, p. 258; *Al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 131, *Al-Khisal*, p. 25; *Rawdat al-Wa'idin*, p. 441; *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, vol. 16, p. 9; *'Uyun al-Hikam wa al-Mawa'id*, p. 231; *Mishkat al-Anwar*, p. 466.

We find that these three groups have some similarities and differences, in that the higher groups have what the lower groups have, but not the other way around. For instance, the second group shares the attention and devotion shown by the third group, but not vice versa. The sacred religious law of Islam imposes some practical commands and obligations which may not be neglected by any group. It establishes the recommended, disapproved, and permitted practices in accordance with the predilections of the people of the third group. It settles its teachings in their hearts through promises of Paradise and threats of the Fire, and preserves them through enjoining the good and prohibiting the evil, for repetition is the strongest argument with the third group.

The Muslim law imposes the same command on all groups. However, it adds some special points for the second group; for instance, higher moral commands, since the main difference between the two groups is in the strength and weakness of their knowledge and its effect. Then it treats the first group in a more austere and finer way than it did the second and the third groups, and, in some cases, what is permissible for the third group is prohibited for the first group, as the *hadith* says: 'The virtues of the righteous are the vices of the intimates.' The religious law also imposes some commands and obligations on the first group alone; other than the first group, no one understands those special duties nor can find the way to learn them. The main difference between the first group and the other groups is that it is founded on divine love rather than self-love, and so the difference between this group and others is in the way of knowledge or perception and not its strength and weakness, or whether it is effective or ineffective. To have some general knowledge of the state of these people, you have to look deeply into the different modes of unity. For as companionship, friendship and intimacy have their rules, affection, love, ecstasy, transport, and that which is

called annihilation also have their rules, and the rules of each are restricted to themselves.

To sum up, all divine laws (and the religious law of Islam in particular) aim at reaching only one goal, that is, to divert man's attention and devotion to God the Exalted. They do that through establishing moral habits and states which lead to God and by calling people to true creeds and practices that produce pure spiritual states and lead to sacred habits. This is clear to anyone who looks into the Holy Qur'an and the Hadith, for they say with clarity that the one criterion is one's obedience or disobedience and closeness to or estrangement from God the Exalted.

Moreover, it is understood from the surface of the religious law that, through His Messenger and in His Book, God has promised certain stations and miracles (*karamat*) to those who hold these high states and moral habits. Therefore, these stations must have some relation with those habits; that is, the soul through these habits attains certain stations and ranks which are explained by the sacred religious law in the issues related to the subjects of Origin and the Resurrection. As was also explained in the supplement to the first chapter, these issues contain certain truths and secrets which cannot be expressed and are beyond the bearing of the common people, and many may not understand them.

3

The Possibility for All People to Attain the Secrets of the Unseen

Evidently, the followers of the divine religions of the prophets are in touch with the other world and are aware of the hidden issues according to their different ranks. But is this a divine gift restricted to them, or it is accessible to others too? In other words, is this confined to them and others have no share in it except after their death, or is it rather an acquired thing? We believe that the latter is true.

To explain, the relation between this world and the other world is that of cause and effect and perfection and imperfection,[1] and it can be called the relation of the exterior to the interior. The exterior is necessarily (and obviously) visible. However, observing the exterior is accompanied by observing the interior, for the exterior is one of the manifestations of the interior; it has relational existence to the interior. Therefore, when the exterior is seen, the interior is actually seen. If man forgets this reality,

[1] All things in the world differ in 'being', just as they share 'being'. In other word, every type of being is a level of being which is different from other beings in intensity and weakness, perfection and imperfection, and unlimitedness and limitedness. This world and the other world share existence and differ from each other in that one is weaker, that is, more dependent and more needy and the other is more intense, that is, more independent and less needy. This is exactly the nature of existential relation between cause and caused. [SKT]

he can again see the interior through reflection and ascetic practices.[2] In other words, the attachment of the soul to the body and its unity with it makes the soul think that it is identical to the body, and all that it perceives through the senses has a separate existence from it when it sees it is separate from the body.[3] Consequently, the soul's confinement to this state makes it forget its rank, which is higher than this state; that is, a rank that belongs to the intermediary world, and to another that is still higher.[4]

[2] Through his ascetic practices, man will understand his soul: its divine origin, its noble existence, its splendid destination, and that the real and true aspect of his existence is his soul. The soul as the agent of actions is the source behind all developmental processes. This dimension of the human being is considered as the inner aspect of the human being, and the body is the subordinate and exterior layer of man's existence. [SKT]

[3] As explained in the introduction, the unity of the soul and body is based on the central principle in transcendent philosophy: 'the soul is material in its advent and spiritual in its survival'. The immaterial soul is not contained in the human body, and the living body is not its container. The soul and the living body are not two separate, dichotomous entities. Rather they are only two manifestations and aspects of one single reality or being that appears throughout different successive levels of being; one is called the body and exterior, and the other is called the soul and interior aspect of man's existence. Like the successive levels of existence, all perfections of the body, as the lower level of man's existence, exist in the soul. This ontological and psychological principle leads us to one of the most important principles in the philosophy of the human soul: the human soul in its unity is all faculty (*al-nafs fi wahdatiha kull al-quwa*). This latter point has been discussed in our previous notes. [SKT]

[4] Islamic philosophers divide existence into three ascending ontological levels. The lowest level is the material world (*'alam al-maddah*); the next level is the intermediate world (*'alam al-mithal* or *barzakh*), whose entities are free from matter, but not quantity (*miqdar*). Finally, there is the highest level, which is the realm of pure intelligence and the divine ideas. In this realm, there is no sign of

By forgetting each rank, the soul forgets its features and the creatures of its world, though it would still intuitively recognise its identity. Once separated from the body, the soul will have no veil or obstacle, and, accordingly, if man through useful knowledge and righteous deeds returns to his self and his identity, he will invariably see the other reality, its different ranks, and the creatures inhabiting its world within the secrets of the interior.[5] By now it is clear

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matter, quantity, or individuality. Before coming to this world, the purely intelligible souls exist in the realm of pure intelligence which is called 'the realm of effacement' (*'alam al-mahw*), or of 'the realm of reality' (*'alam al-haqiqah*). The existence of the soul in that highest realm as yet has no individuation. The term *mahw* in Arabic means disappearance or annihilation. This realm is called *mahw* because there is no individuation there, which is the characteristic associated with matter. The realm of *mahw* is the realm of unity. It is also called 'reality', because it is the real existence, and the lower realms whose existence is mixed with non-existence (limitation) are not existence in its ultimate sense. In this treatise, Tabataba'i with the same explanation and proofs calls the higher realm the 'interior'. In the *'alam al-mahw* all souls exist in one united and indivisible existent. As an illustration of this, we can mention the case of words and the ink with which they are written. With any ink, one can write any words. As long as the words are not written, they remain a potentiality in that ink. As long as the words remain unwritten, we cannot say the words do not exist; but at the same time, we cannot say they exist either. In the immaterial world, the soul has no individuality, but by descending to the material realm, human souls earn their particular individuation. [SKT]

[5] By descending from the realm of unity to the material realm, the human soul starts its initial, descending journey of existentiation and passes through three successive stations until it becomes manifest in the material world as an individual human being. Then it begins another movement, which is its ascending journey towards its spiritual or intellective perfection. Through this second, ascending journey the human soul has the potential to return to its main abode, in its fully perfected state, to the realm of Divine Unity. With the soul as a chief active agent of the human being, all perfectional

that it is possible for man to have general knowledge of the hidden secret truths which he will face after death.

A Supplementary Note

Qur'anic verses and *hadith*s provide evidence for the above; some of this evidence will be mentioned in the following. Indeed the main argument of those who deny that this happiness refers to seeing the Exalted God, is that this is impossible. They argue that since His existence is free from any bodily characteristics such as accidents, directions, and spaces, He therefore cannot be seen by human eyes, for the object of vision as such must be a body with quality, direction and a certain position. These people have founded their argument on the *hadith*s that deny the possibility of seeing God and have given a metaphorical interpretation of all the verses and *hadith*s which prove that God can be seen in a non-physical way.

Evidently, they have founded their argument on the impossibility of physically seeing God, which is claimed by no one except a few Sunni theologians and those who insist on a literal, external interpretation of religion. The words of the infallible Imams answer them by denying the possibility of literally seeing God, as is clear to everyone who looks into their polemics and debates. Those who

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transformations from potentiality to actuality take place within the soul itself and hence it is the source of all perfections (*kamalat*) and effects (*athar*). Its knowledge has a key role in perfecting the soul. According to Tabataba'i, human knowledge is not separate from the existence and the essence of the knower but is incorporated into his existence. That is why man's existence attains perfection gradually as his knowledge and perceptions increase and his existential level upgrades, like a building which is completed as its bricks are laid. See the author's philosophical explanation on knowledge in his *Nihayat al-Hikmah*. [SKT]

believe in the possibility of this vision, however, try to prove something else, that is, the contingent being – despite his dependence and the mere deficiency of his essence – can see his pure All-Sufficient Creator with all his contingent existence rather than his sensible vision or intellectual mind. This has been proved by many conclusive arguments and is confirmed literally by the Holy Qur'an and the Hadith, and the arguments even contend that the contingent being cannot but experience this vision. Moreover, by the 'possibility of the vision', it is meant one's realisation of the vision which is knowledge, intuitive knowledge, rather than the necessary vision itself. In short, since their denial is mainly founded on the impossibility of seeing God, we can cite some of the arguments that confirm this possibility and leave the rest for later. God says:

> Some faces will be fresh on that day, looking at their Lord. (76:22-23)
>
> The end is toward your Lord. (53:42)
>
> To Him you will be returned. (29:21)
>
> Indeed we shall return to our Lord. (43:14)
>
> And toward Him is the return. (5:18)
>
> Look! To God do all matters return. (42:53)
>
> To Him you shall be brought back. (7:245)
>
> Certainly We gave Moses the Book, [declaring] 'Do not be in doubt about the encounter [or meeting] with Him.' (32.23)
>
> Whoever expects to encounter [or meet] God [should know that] God's [appointed] time will indeed come. (29:5)

These two terms – namely, meeting (*liqa'*) and returning (*ruju'*), are repeated frequently in the Holy Qur'an and the Hadith. He also says:

> Soon We shall show them Our signs in the horizons and in their own souls until it becomes clear to them that He is the Real. Is it not sufficient that your Lord is a witness to all things? Look! They are indeed in doubt about the encounter with their Lord! Look! He indeed encompasses all things. (41:53-54)

The first verse ('Soon We shall show them Our signs in the horizons and in their own souls...') indicates that the word *shahid* ('witness') is actually a passive participle, *mashhud* or 'that which is seen', rather than a present participle, '*shahid*' or 'witness'. The verse 'Look! They are indeed in doubt about the encounter with their Lord' reads as if an objection, and it is answered by the rest of the verse: 'Look! He indeed encompasses all things.' The form of the last verse: 'Look! They are indeed in doubt...' contradicts the interpretation that the meeting means metaphorically death or the Day of Judgment, for on that Day His signs and Truth will be manifested, and He would be too visible to be denied or doubted by any one. For God the Exalted has already rejected their doubt in meeting Him by encompassing every thing, and His encompassing is equal in this world and the Day of Judgment. Therefore, meeting cannot be interpreted as death or the Day of Judgment because meeting covers both of them. Otherwise, there would be no link between this verse and the last verse. The meaning of the verse, and God knows better, is that it is enough evidence for His truth and reality that He is seen by every thing, but He shows His signs to them in the horizons and in their souls because they doubt they will see or meet Him. Certainly, they have no right to be in doubt, for how could they doubt while He encompasses every thing, and 'He is the First and the Last and the Manifest and the Hidden' (57:3). 'Whichever way you turn, there is the Face of God' (2:115), and 'There is no secret talk among three, but He is their fourth, nor among five but He is their sixth, nor less than that, nor more, but He is with them

wherever they may be' (45:7).

One cannot doubt the possibility of seeing or meeting a Being as such, though one may doubt that His signs will manifest themselves indisputably. It should also be noted that what is said here does not contradict Imam 'Ali's speech related in *Tawhid al-Saduq*; namely, that the word "meeting" in the Qur'an always means resurrection.[6] For we mainly discuss the common usage of the concept as it is manifest rather than its extension. Evidently resurrection is one of the extensions of meeting as it is shown in some of the verses and *hadiths* which will be cited below. God the Exalted says:

> They warn you of the encounter of this Day of yours. (6:130)
>
> When we have been lost in the dust, shall we be indeed created anew? Rather, they disbelieve in the meeting with their Lord. (32:10)

The extension finds many expressions in the Hadith. In one of the *hadith* related in *Al-Mahasin*,[7] Zurarah relates that Imam al-Sadiq (A) said concerning the following verse:

> 'When your Lord took from the Children of Adam, from their loins, their descendants and made them bear witness over themselves [He said to them]: "Am I not your Lord?" They said, "Yes indeed! We bear witness..."' (7:172). That was their seeing God, but He made them forget the vision and admit it in their chests, and were it not for that, no one would have known his Creator and Provider, and the words of God refer to this: 'And if you ask them who created them, they will surely say, "God."' (43:87)

[6] *Tawhid al-Saduq*, p. 267.

[7] *Al-Mahasin*, vol. 1, p. 438; *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol 5 p. 223.

Another *hadith* comes in *Tafsir al-Qummi*.[8] Ibn Miskan says that he once asked Imam al-Sadiq (A) about God's words 'When your Lord took from...and they said "Yes"' (7:172) as to whether that was by way of seeing Him. He answered:

> Yes! They retained the knowledge but forgot that situation, and they will remember it. Were it not for that no one would have known his Creator nor his Provider. Some of them admitted that by their tongues in the world of pre-existence but did not believe in their heart, and so God says: 'They were not the ones to believe in what they had denied earlier. (7:101)

Another *hadith* is given in *Tafsir al-Ayyashi*.[9] Zurarah says:

> I asked Imam al-Baqir (A) about the saying of the Exalted God 'When your Lord took from the children of Adam, from their loins, their descendants and made them bear witness over themselves.' He answered: 'God took the descendants of Adam from his loin until the Day of Judgment, and they came out like dust. Then He introduced and showed Himself to them, and were it not for that no one would have known his Lord, for God says 'If you ask them, "Who created the heavens and earth?" they will surely say, "God."' (31:25)

In another *hadith* in *Tawhid al-Saduq*,[10] Abu Basir says:

> I asked Imam al-Sadiq: 'Tell me if the believers would see God on the Day of Judgment.' He answered: 'Yes! They even saw Him before the Day of Judgment.' Then I asked: 'When?' He answered: 'When He told them, "Am I not your Lord?" They said, "Yes!"' Then he was silent for a little while and afterwards said: 'Indeed the

[8] *Tafsir al-Qummi*, vol. 1, p. 248; *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 5 p. 237.
[9] *Tafsir al-Ayyashi*, vol. 2, p. 173.
[10] *Tawhid al-Saduq*, p. 117; *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 4, p. 44.

> believers see Him in this world before the Day of Judgment. Do you not see Him at this time?'

Then Abu Basir continued:

> I told him 'Can I speak to people of what you told me?' and he answered: 'No! For if you speak of this to a denier, who is ignorant of the meaning of what you say, he would deny it and conclude that it is anthropomorphism and heresy. Indeed seeing by the heart is different from seeing by the eye. God is above the description of the anthropomorphists and the unbelievers.'

In a *hadith* transmitted from Hisham in *Tawhid al-Saduq*, a non-believer asks Imam al-Sadiq (A) about the descending of God the Exalted to the heaven of this world. The Imam explains that it is not like the descending of a body from one body to another body, but...

> He descends to the heaven of this world with no pain or motion, and He is in the heaven of this world as He is on the Throne in the seventh heaven. Indeed He unveils His greatness and shows Himself to His friends as He likes and reveals of His power as much as He wishes; He appears the same from near and far.[11]

In another *hadith* given in *Tawhid al-Saduq*,[12] Imam 'Ali (A) says:

> Moses asked and praised God the Exalted by saying: 'My Lord! Show Yourself to me so I can see You' (7:143). He demanded a great thing and asked a mighty question, and therefore he was punished. Then God the Exalted said: 'You will not see Me in this world until you die, for then you would see Me in the Hereafter.'

[11] *Tawhid al-Saduq*, p. 248; *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 3, p. 331.
[12] *Tawhid al-Saduq*, p. 262; *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 3, p. 135.

In one of the *hadith* that describe Paradise, it is also narrated that God the Exalted will manifest Himself there to His friends, and He will tell them: 'You will see Me every Friday.'[13] In another *hadith* in *Jam' al-Jawami'*, it is said: 'You will see your Lord as you see the moon the night it is full.'[14]

Some of these *hadiths* are particularly related to the Messenger of God and the Imams (A). Muhammad ibn al-Fadl in a *hadith* given in *Tawhid* says:

> I asked Abu al-Hasan (A) 'Did the Messenger of God see his Exalted Lord?' He answered: 'Yes. But he saw Him by his heart. Have you not heard God saying: "The heart did not deny what it saw" (53:11)? Indeed he did not see Him by eyes but by the heart."[15]

In another *hadith* in *Tawhid al-Saduq,* Imam al-Rida (A) speaks of the Messenger of God: 'When he looked at his Lord by his heart, he wrapped Him in a light like the light of the veils until he saw what is there in the veils."[16]

In *Kamil al-Ziyarah,* it is also related by Ibn Quluyah, on the authority of Ibn Abi Yafur, that Imam al-Sadiq (A) has said:

> When the Messenger of God was in the house of Fatimah and Husayn was in his lap, suddenly he wept and fell prostrate to God. Then he said: 'O Fatimah daughter of Muhammad! God the Highest made Himself manifest to me in this house of yours in this hour of mine in the most beautiful form and the comeliest shape and told me: "O Muhammad! Do you

[13] *Al-Ikhtisas*, p. 354- 356; *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 8, p. 215- 217.

[14] Abu Hanifah, *Musnad*, p. 579; Abu Awanah, *Musnad*, vol. 1, p. 376; *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 91, p. 251; *Jawami' al-Jami'*, vol. 1, p. 700; *Al-Safi*, vol. 2, p. 235.

[15] *Tawhid al-Saduq*, p. 116; *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 4, p. 43.

[16] *Tawhid al-Saduq*, p. 113; *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 4, p. 40.

> love Husayn?" and I said: "Yes! He is the light of my eyes and my flower and the fruit of my heart and the skin between my two eyes."' And while the Prophet had his hand on the head of Husayn, he continued: 'God then told me, "O Muhammad! Blessed is the child who has My blessings and greetings and mercy and good pleasure...".'[17]

Two other *hadiths* have been related repeatedly from Imam 'Ali (A): 'I have never worshipped a Lord that I have not seen'[18] and 'I have not seen anything unless I saw God before it.'[19] In short, *hadiths* like this are many, recurrent, and widely transmitted. The meaning of vision in them is not the intensity of knowledge acquired through argument and proof, for that would be conceptual knowledge. Moreover, many other *hadiths* indicate that such knowledge is not true knowledge, let alone vision or intuition, and so our intended point is proved, and all praise be to God.

[17] *Kamil al-Ziyarah*, p. 67; *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 44, p. 238.

[18] *Tawhid al-Saduq*, p. 109 and *Amali*, p. 281; *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 4, p. 27; *Al-Safi* vol. 2, p. 236.

[19] *Sharh Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 3, p. 83 & 98; vol. 5, p. 83; vol. 9, p. 427; *Mashriq al-Shamsayn*, p. 402; *Miftah al-Falah*, p. 289.

4

The Way to Reach the Proved Possibility of Perfection

Since the relation of the truths to this material world and corporeal soul is the relation of the interior to the exterior, and every existential characteristic that belongs to the exterior belongs in reality to its interior and then accidentally and subsequently to the exterior itself, the soul's necessary perception of itself belongs first and essentially to its interior and accidentally and subsequently to itself.[1] For the soul perceives the truth that is interior to

[1] The author applies the term 'interior' to the higher level of existence and 'exterior' to the lower level. For instance, the soul as the higher and more intense existent – compared with the body – is the interior aspect of the human being, which in its own turn is the exterior of the higher stages in its substantial movement. Therefore, the soul has a spectrum of existence from its material origin to the highest level of its immaterial existence; each lower level is the exterior for the higher one. Here Tabataba'i uses the term 'accidental', meaning that the existence of this world compared to the existence of the intermediary and immaterial realms is weaker and dependent on the higher level, as if its existence is not a real existence. With the Sadrian word, as discussed in the Introduction, applying the existence to the exterior (body, this world or the caused) is an intangible application (*raqiqah*), and applying existence to the interior (soul, the previous and the next world or the cause) is its real sense. Based on this, applying the concept of 'realisation' (*tahaqquq*) on the material realm or the human body is the predication of an intangible existent; the predication of this term on the higher realm

the soul before it perceives itself, and this truth is more evident. That which is hidden in it is older and more evident than it, until it goes back to that truth which is the origin of every truth, for it is the oldest of known objects and the most evident of self-evident things. Moreover, because existence is pure and has no second or other, there is no obstacle or barrier to its perception, and this is a perfect and indisputable argument.[2]

Having said that, we may add that every truth that exists must be complete in its essence and accidents, and this is a self-evident premise which to be validated must only be conceived perfectly. For if we suppose, for example, a truth such as A with accidents such as B, C and D, this truth in essence must be A and not less than A; for less than A would not be A, whereas we have assumed it is A. Furthermore, as such, it requires accidents B, C, and D; and less than B, C, or D would not be B, C, or D, whereas we have already assumed them to be B, C, and D, which is evident. Finally, that which every truth requires in its essence and accidents is what we call perfection and happiness.

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or the soul (which is more intense existence) is the predication of the real existent (*baqiqah*). This does not mean that the lower level does not exist, but this means its existence is accidental. [SKT]

[2] The interior aspect of any reality is free from any conditions and limitations of the exterior aspect. The true aspect of human being is the soul because it has less limitations than the human body. In the transcendent philosophy of Mulla Sadra, based on the principle of the 'bodily advent of the soul', the reality of the soul, which is truly an immaterial entity that has descended from the realm of divinity, is manifested in material form in bodily mode. When the human being knows the reality of the self, it perceives its interior aspect. Knowledge of the immaterial reality – including intellects, the intermediary world, and God and His attributes – assists the human soul to improve its existence which is its substantial movement from its material mode towards spirituality. [SKT]

On the other hand, the truth of every perfection in its essence cannot be qualified with non-existence, which is a defect, for every perfection in essence possesses its essence in entirety and cannot lose any part of it unless it is qualified with necessary non-existence. Therefore, the truth of A, for example, is one when it is assumed as A, and the separate existence of this example of A from that other example of A could be due only to their qualification with non-existence, which makes A lose something of its essence but none of its accidents in each of them, which is absurd by *reductio ad absurdum* and inversion considering the essence of A and knowing that the example which lacks the particular characteristic is an example of A.[3]

Therefore, the truth of A has two levels: one is related to its essence in which it lacks nothing of that essence, and another is related to that example of A, in which A loses some of its perfection. Of course, there is no doubt in its existence, for if we assume that example is one of the ranks of A, it would also be A, and that will be absurd, too. The example will exist if it is accompanied with the truth, but separated from the truth it will be nothing, for it would have nothing except non-existence. So, it will exist with it

[3] Any existent has the perfections of its own (essential and accidental) level, and the limitations of the lower levels do not exist in it, as lacking the perfection of higher stages does not harm its essential perfection at that level. The reality of any entity at a level of existence is distinguished by its limitations and lack of perfection from higher realms, so when we say that A exists, we define and limit its reality by distinguishing it from essential and accidental properties in higher realms. In other word, existence is a unit reality with different grades, but the different grades and levels of existence refer to the limitations of each level compared to the higher state of existence. Hence, what distinguishes various beings is existence itself because, according to the principiality of existence, there is nothing other than existence to make such a distinction. [SKT]

and stop existing without it.[4] The example is nothing but the truth, and in itself it is nominal and nonexistent, a phenomenon that is often termed 'manifestation'. Accordingly, the truth of every perfection is absolute, eternal, and unrestricted, and the proximity of every perfection to its truth is to the extent of the manifestation of its truth in it, that is, its association with fetters and limits. The more the fetters are, the manifestation would be less, and vice versa. Therefore, evidently the Exalted God is the ultimate truth of every perfection, for to Him belongs every pure perfection and beauty, and the closeness of every existent to Him would be to the extent of its fetters and limits of non-existence.[5] Moreover, it is also clear by now that to reach true perfection, every being must come to annihilation, for it must release itself from its essential or accidental bounds and fetters, and conversely the annihilation of every being requires the subsistence of its truth only. God the Exalted says: 'Everyone on it [the earth] is perishing, yet everlasting is the Face of your Lord,

[4] The reality of existence is a single reality present in all beings. This means that in various beings there is only one and the same reality. At the same time, these various beings are different in terms of the strength of this same reality. Therefore, the difference between the realities is due to existence itself not non-existence. [SKT]

[5] Existence as gradational reality manifests from the highest level to the lowest level. The lower level has weaker existence than the higher level, but the weakness stems from being caused (the effect), and the effect is dependent on and weaker than the cause. Compared to the effect, the cause is the stronger mode of the effect. This is, of course, a characteristic of the cause in comparison with the effect, and if the cause itself is an effect of another cause, then it will have a mode of existence weaker than its own cause. Now, if we consider the reality of existence, as it is and regardless of any kind of dependence and direction added to it, it will be equal to perfection, absoluteness, independence, strength, actuality, greatness, glory, boundlessness, luminosity and – in one word – God. [SKT]

majestic and munificent' (55:26-27).

So the true perfection of every contingent being is that which leads him to annihilation, and the true perfection of man is also that which makes him absolute and free, and with it he dies to his humanity, and there is absolutely no other perfection for him. On the other hand, as was shown in the last argument, by witnessing his essence which is equal to his existence, man witnesses all his truths and also his final truth, and since with that he achieves annihilation, we may say that man's vision and annihilation coincide, or we can even argue that the truth of man witnesses itself while he is perishing.[6] So man's true perfection is his true perfection in essence and accidents – that is, his final perfection in essence, attributes and acts; or, to put it in other words, his annihilation in essence, his attributes and acts and disappearing in the Exalted God, which stand respectively for professing God's unity in Essence, Names, and Acts. This in turn means man's ability to see that there is no essence, attribute, or act other than those of God the Exalted in a way that fits the sanctity of His greatness, Exalted be His might, without falling into incarnation or

[6] It is entirely possible for all the attributes, properties, and effects of the different ranks and degrees of existence to be realised in a single human individual. In light of the principle of substantial transformation, each human individual, given that he is a 'comprehensive being', can – by essence – come to possess all the degrees of being, from the lowest to the highest, within his own existential sphere. From a wider ontological perspective, all created phenomena are already advancing towards the highest state of immateriality by their substance, but this global process can attain its ultimate goal only by directing each human soul in the right direction leading to its existential perfection. Therefore, all movements toward immateriality are not perfectional movements; rather, each human being can achieve the highest level of divinity or the most extreme form of satanic powers. [SKT]

unification, Exalted is God above such attributes.[7] This argument is one of the gifts of God the Exalted, explained in this treatise, and praised be God for that.

It is also understood from the argument offered at the beginning of this chapter that witnessing these truths and understanding them is a corollary to witnessing and knowing the soul. For man's nearest way to attain them is to know his soul, which, as was explained already, is achieved by the renunciation of everything other than God the Exalted and turning to Him.

Supplementary Notes

If we look deeply into the Holy Qur'an and the Hadith, we see that the criteria for reward and punishment are founded on obedience and submission or disobedience and recalcitrance. Consequently it is understood that sins, even fatal grave ones, committed unknowingly, will not bring about any punishment, and acts of obedience will induce no reward if they are done with no prior intention of coming close to and submitting to God, except those acts which are essentially accompanied by submission, such as

[7] The perfections and properties of all beings will be found once again (that is, at the end of the ascending arc) in the realm of subsistence (*baqa'*) after annihilation (*fana'*), just as they used to be, but in the realm of annihilation, perfection exclusively belongs to God. At that stage, there is nothing other than God to have any perfection. There is only the Sacred Essence (*dhat*) of the Supreme One in that realm. It should be noted that perfection exclusively and entirely belongs to God even in the lowest stage of existence and the ascription of perfection to His creatures in the realm of multiplicity is not a real ascription. The veil of illusion and bodily involvement prevents us from seeing the interior of all interiors – namely, the Truth (*al-haqq*, i.e. God). At the stage of annihilation, man will realise that real perfection exclusively belongs to the Essence of the Truth, and ascribing it to others is utterly metaphorical. [SKT]

some noble moral precepts.

Moreover, those who commit sins unknowingly will not be deprived of virtue if their intention is obedience, just as insincere and resentful obedience is not free from vice. Similarly the degrees of obedience and disobedience differ according to the different levels of submission and recalcitrance they reflect. This is why it is related from the Prophet (S): 'The best deeds are the most difficult.'[8] Many *hadiths* have also been related on the acts of obedience and disobedience and their different ranks of greatness and baseness or reward and punishment. The sound intellect also gives the same judgment, and most of the verses of the Holy Qur'an refer people to the judgment of the intellect. On the other hand, the intellect's judgment is based on obedience or disobedience to the Truth only, and these two evidently differ according to their different degrees. Finally, because happiness and misery are linked to those two, they too are of a wide range and differ according to the different degrees of obedience and disobedience.

As a consequence, the special happiness, which is happiness in perfection, belongs to the followers of the true religion. However, general happiness is not confined to the people of true religion, and it may also be appropriated by others if they show a degree of submission or a decrease in their disobedience. This is also confirmed by the intellect and religious law, for the latter draws the limits of the intellect's judgment, as is said in the well-known Prophetic *hadith*: 'I have been sent to complete the noble character traits.'[9] This is also perhaps the reason why Kasra and

[8] *Gharib al-Hadith* vol. 2, p. 480; *Muntaha al-Matlab*, vol. 1, p. 445 & vol 2, p. 716; *Al-Habl al-Matin*, p. 133.

[9] *Majma' al-Bayan*, vol. 10, p. 86; *Ahkam al-Qur'an*, vol. 2, p. 281; *Fayd al-Qadir*, vol. 5, p. 209; *Al-Jami' al-Saghir*, vol. 1, p. 395; *Tuhfat al-Ahwadhi*, vol. 5, p. 470; *Makarim al-Akhlaq*, p. 8; *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 67, p. 372.

Hatam, it is said, suffer no pain for their justice and generosity. In *Al-Khisal*, Imam al-Sadiq (A) relates from his father and his grandfather that Imam 'Ali (A) had said:

> Paradise has eight gates. From one gate enter the prophets and the truthful, from another gate enter the martyrs and the righteous, and from five other gates enter our followers and lovers. I will keep standing on the path and call and say: 'My Lord! Safeguard my followers and lovers and helpers and friends and those who followed me in that world.' A call will then be heard from the interior of the Throne saying: 'Your request is accepted, and you may intercede for your followers.' Then all of my followers and those who befriended me and helped me and fought my enemies by deed or word will intercede for seventy of his neighbours and relatives. There would be another gate from which enter other Muslims who profess there is no god other than Allah, and who do not have even a trace of hatred in their heart for us, the People of the House.[10]

In the *Tafsir al-Qummi*, Dharis al-Kinani relates:

> I asked Imam al-Baqir (A): 'What will be the state of the believers in the unity of God and the prophecy of Muhammad among the sinful Muslims who die and have no Imam and do not know your guardianship (*wilayah*)?' He answered: 'Truly they will remain in their graves and will not leave them. Then those who have done a righteous deed and showed no hostility will have a path to Paradise which God has created in the West, and he will be blessed in his grave until the Day of Judgment when he encounters God, Who will take him into account for his good deeds and bad deeds, and he will go then either to Paradise or the

[10] *Al-Khisal*, p. 408; *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 8, p. 39 & 121; *Tafsir al-Safi*, vol. 4, p. 332.

> Fire. Those are the ones who hope for the decision of God.' He added: 'So will be done with the downtrodden, simpletons, children and Muslim children who have not reached the age of puberty. But for those Muslims who have professed enmity towards us (*nasibi*), a way will open for them to the Fire which God has created in the East, and then flames and sparks of fire and smoke and the seething of hot water will enter upon them until the Day of Judgment, when they will enter Hell."[11]

In the Supplication of Kumayl, Imam 'Ali (A) relates:

> Surely I say decisively that had you not decreed to chastise those who deny You and determined to leave your enemies eternally in the Fire, You would have made all the Fire cold and peaceful, and no one would have a place or abode in it, but holy be Your Names! You swore to fill it with the unbelievers, from the jinn and humankind alike, and to make your enemies dwell in it eternally.'[12]

In addition, most of the verses of the Holy Qur'an threaten those who have been shown the evidence and given the argument, and they further relate disbelief to denial and recalcitrance. God says: 'For those who are faithless and deny Our signs, they shall be the inhabitants of Hell' (50:10 & 86). 'So that he who perishes might perish by a manifest proof, and he who lives may live on by a manifest proof' (8:42).

In short, the only criteria for happiness and misery or reward and punishment are the uprightness of the heart and the purity of the soul. God the Exalted says: 'The day when neither wealth nor children will profit except for him who comes to God with a pure heart' (26:88-89). 'The day

[11] *Tafsir al-Qummi*, vol. 2, p. 260; *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 6, p. 286 & vol. 72, p. 158; *Muntaqa al-Jaman*, vol. 1, p. 313; *Al-Mizan*, vol. 5, p. 58.
[12] *Al-Sahifah al-'Alawiyyah al-Jami'ah*, p. 397.

when the secrets are examined' (86:9).

All divine religions present the same message, which is clearly visible in their teachings and ideals. This has also been the opinion of the earlier scholars of the divine religions.

The position of the Islamic law in that respect is even clearer, and although, as was mentioned at the end of Chapter 2, religious law calls people towards every possible happiness, as the soul is the nearest and most perfect way to knowing the Lord, it gives a stronger and surer emphasis to it. Therefore, you see the Holy Qur'an and the Hadith invite to this goal in every possible way. God the Exalted says:

> O you who have faith! Be wary of God, and let every soul consider what it sends ahead for tomorrow, and be wary of God. God is indeed well aware of what you do. And do not be like those who forget God, so He makes them forget their own souls. It is they who are the transgressors. (59:18-19)

This verse is contrary to the well-known *hadiths* from the Prophet in Shi'a and Sunni sources: 'He who knows his soul truly he knows his Lord.'[13] Furthermore, God says: 'Take care of your own souls. He who strays cannot hurt you if you are guided' (5:105). Amidi in his *Al-Ghurar wa al-Durar* relates more than twenty of Imam 'Ali's sayings on the knowledge of the self.[14] Some of them are as follows:

[13] *'Uyun al-Hikam wa al-Mawa'id*, p. 430; *Misbah al-Shari'ah*, p. 13; *Tadhkirat al-Mawdu'at*, p. 11.

[14] According to Islamic philosophers, the key to knowledge of God and His attributes, the Day of Resurrection and the returning of the creation on that Day is an understanding of the soul and its levels. Understanding the soul is nothing but the presence of the soul, an understanding which Tabataba'i in his *Nihayat al-Hikmah* calls 'knowledge by presence' (*al-'ilm al-huduri*). Knowledge by presence refers to the presence of something by something else (*hudur al-shay'*

The clever one is he who knows his soul and makes his deeds pure.[15]

Knowledge of the self is the more useful of the two kinds of knowledge.[16]

The knower is he who knows his soul and delivers and purifies it from everything that keeps it far from God.[17]

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li al-shay'), for example, the presence of the psychic existence of an intelligible for the human soul. As long as a person does not truly know or recognise his real self or soul, he is in a state of essential ignorance; therefore, he will not be aware of his spiritual station vis-à-vis his Creator, and he will not realise towards which destination (i.e., the state of spiritual perfection, *kamal*) he is travelling. Thus, knowledge of the human soul is the foundation of all forms of higher knowledge – most obviously, spiritual awareness – that the human being is able to acquire. The distinctive perfection of the human soul depends on its knowledge of the divine Source (*mabda'*) of creation and the *telos* of its creation and existence in the world. This metaphysical knowledge of the Source and the *telos* of creation cannot be achieved unless the person is first able to know his real self or his soul. Hence, the perfection of the human soul is, in the ultimate analysis, dependent upon our knowledge of the self. In *Al-Mizan*, under the explanation of verse 5:105, Tabataba'i extensively discusses the issue of self-knowledge and its role in the metaphysical sciences. Elsewhere he mentions that upon hearing this verse, one who 'has no intention but to remember God and forget all else...understands that the sole royal path which will guide him fully and completely is the path of "self-realisation". His true guide who is God Himself obliges him to know himself, to leave behind all other ways and to seek the path of self-knowledge, to see God through the window of his soul, gaining in this way the real object of his search.' (*Shi'ite Islam*, trans. S. H. Nasr (Karachi: n.p., 1975), p. 116-7). [SKT]

[15] *Sharh al-Ghurar wa al-Durar*, vol. 1, p. 297; *'Uyun al-Hikam wa al-Mawa'id*, p. 45.

[16] *Sharh al-Ghurar wa al-Durar*, vol. 25, p. 2.

[17] *Sharh al-Ghurar wa al-Durar*, vol. 2, p. 48; *'Uyun al-Hikam wa al-Mawa'id*, p. 53.

The worst ignorance is man's ignorance of his soul.[18]

The greatest wisdom is man's knowledge of his soul.[19]

Of people, he knows himself most who fears his Lord most.[20]

The highest wisdom is man's knowledge of his soul, for he who knows his soul is wise, and he who ignores it goes astray.[21]

I wonder at the person who is looking for what he is missing while he is missing his soul and does not seek it.[22]

I wonder how a person who does not know himself could know his Lord![23]

The ultimate end of knowledge is man's knowledge of his soul.[24]

How can a person who does not know himself know others?[25]

It is enough knowledge for man to know his soul.[26]

It is enough ignorance for man to be ignorant of his soul.[27]

[18] *Sharh al-Ghurar wa al-Durar*, vol. 2, p. 387.
[19] Ibid., p. 419.
[20] Ibid., p. 424; *Mustadrak al-Wasa'il*, vol. 11, p. 236.
[21] *Sharh al-Ghurar wa al-Durar*, vol. 2, p. 442.
[22] Ibid., vol. 4, p. 340; *'Uyun al-Hikam wa al-Mawa'id*, p. 329.
[23] *Sharh al-Ghurar wa al-Durar*, vol. 4, p. 341; *'Uyun al-Hikam wa al-Mawa'id*, p. 329.
[24] *Sharh al-Ghurar wa al-Durar*, vol. 4, p. 372.
[25] Ibid., p. 565; *'Uyun al-Hikam wa al-Mawa'id*, p. 383.
[26] *Sharh al-Ghurar wa al-Durar*, vol. 4, p. 575; *'Uyun al-Hikam wa al-Mawa'id*, p. 386.
[27] *'Uyun al-Hikam wa al-Mawa'id*, p. 386.

He who knows himself will renounce the world.[28]

He who knows his soul will fight it.[29]

He who does not know his self will neglect it.[30]

He who knows his soul knows his Lord.[31]

He who knows his soul, his position will become great.[32]

He who does not know his soul is even more ignorant of others, and he who knows his soul knows others more.[33]

He who knows his self has attained the end of all knowledge and science.[34]

He who does not know his soul is far from the way of delivery and blunders in error and ignorance.[35]

The knowledge of the self is the most useful knowledge.[36]

He gains the highest victory who has gained the knowledge of the self.[37]

Do not be ignorant of your soul, for he who does not

[28] *Sharh al-Ghurar wa al-Durar*, vol. 5, p. 172; *'Uyun al-Hikam wa al-Mawa'id*, p. 452.

[29] *Sharh al-Ghurar wa al-Durar*, vol. 5, p. 177, *'Uyun al-Hikam wa al-Mawa'id*, p. 453.

[30] *Sharh al-Ghurar wa al-Durar*, vol. 5, p. 178.

[31] Ibid., p. 194; *'Uyun al-Hikam wa al-Mawa'id*, p. 430; *Misbah al-Shari'ah*, p. 13; *Awali al-Liyali*, vol. 1, p. 54; *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 2, p. 32; *Matlub Kull Talib*, p. 5; *Sharh Mi'at Kalimah*, p. 57.

[32] *Sharh al-Ghurar wa al-Durar*, vol. 5, p. 208.

[33] Ibid., p. 333-4.

[34] Ibid., p. 405.

[35] Ibid., p. 426.

[36] Ibid., vol. 6, p. 148.

[37] Ibid., p. 172; *'Uyun al-Hikam wa al-Mawa'id*, p. 497.

know himself knows nothing.[38]

Evidently all these *hadiths*, as one may see, reject the interpretation of those scholars who interpret the Prophet's saying 'He who knows his soul truly knows his Lord' as indicating the impossibility of knowing the self, for it is linked to knowing the Lord, which is impossible. This interpretation is also dismissed by the literal meaning of the above *hadith* and also the Prophetic *hadith* 'He best knows his soul among you who knows his Lord best.'[39] On the other hand, even if some hold that knowing the Lord is impossible, the Lord could still be known by intuition rather than through speculation and reflection. If we accept what they say, then it is impossible to know God in the sense of having an absolute knowledge of Him. However, knowledge in accordance with man's potential is not impossible. In short, it is unnecessary to say that self-knowledge is the best and nearest way to perfection; what must be said is how to follow this way.

Some hold that the way to self-knowledge has not been explained by the religious law, and some authors even claim that this way in Islam is like monasticism invented by the Christians, which was not prescribed by the divine decree, but God accepted it from them. God says: 'As for monasticism, they invented it – We had not prescribed it for them – only seeking God's pleasure. Yet they did not observe it with due observance' (57:127). They say, in brief, the way to self-knowledge also has not been prescribed by the religious law, though it is a satisfactory way to perfection. Accordingly one may come across some ascetic practices or special methods with some of the people of this

[38] *Sharh al-Ghurar wa al-Durar*, vol. 6, p. 304; *'Uyun al-Hikam wa al-Mawa'id*, p. 524.

[39] *Shaykh al-Tusi, Al-Iqtisad,* p. 14; *Rawdat al-Wa'idin,* p. 20; *Al-Mizan*, vol. 6, p. 170.

way which are not found in the Holy Qur'an or the Hadith and cannot be seen in the biography of the Messenger of God or the Imams of his Household.

These methods of self-knowledge are founded on what is said above. They further contend that the aim is to reach the goal in every possible way. Moreover, one may see they follow some of the ways attributed to non-Muslims among the divine scholars and the people of asceticism, which is clear to anyone who consults their books or examines the ways ascribed to them. However, the truth professed by the people of Truth, which is taken from the literal meaning of the Holy Qur'an and the Hadith, is that the religious law of Islam never allows the wayfarer to turn to other than God the Exalted nor trust other than Him unless in a way the law commands him to take and follow. Moreover, the law of Islam has left not even a trace of happiness or misery unexplained, nor has it left any of the major or minor requirements of wayfaring to God the Exalted unexplained. For every soul is bound to what it has gained, good or bad.[40] God says:

> And We sent down the Book to you as a clarification of all things. (16:89)
>
> Certainly We have drawn for mankind in this Qur'an every kind of parable. (31:58)
>
> Say, if you love God, then follow me; God will love you. (3:31)
>
> In the Apostle of God there is certainly for you a good exemplar. (33:21)

And there are other verses, and the *hadith*s from the Household of the Prophet in this respect are widely

[40] 'God does not task any soul beyond its capacity. Whatever good it earns is to its benefit, and whatever evil it incurs is to its harm.' (2:286). [Translator]

transmitted (*mutawatir*).

Accordingly, man's portion of perfection is to the extent of his following the religious law, and as was explained, this perfection is graded and has different degrees, and as one of the people of perfection has excellently said, to turn from the religious law to difficult ascetic practices is an escape from the more difficult to that which is easier. For following the religious law is a gradual and continuous killing of the self so far that it exists, but difficult ascetic practices involve a sudden killing which is easier and needs but little sacrifice. In short, the religious law does not refrain from explaining the way through self-knowledge.

To explain, evidently devotions are of three kinds: devotions to gain Paradise, devotions to shun the Fire, and devotions for the sake of God that are mixed with neither fear of the Fire nor yearning for Paradise. The aim of the first and the second kinds of devotions is comfort or immunity from chastisement and, therefore, their purpose is fulfilling the desires of the self. Indeed God the Exalted is worshipped for the sake of these desires and He becomes the means to reach these desires, and a means qua means could be the purpose of devotion only incidentally and accidentally. So this devotion is devotion to desires.

The third kind of devotion, however, is the true devotion, and it has been explained in different ways. In *Al-Kafi*, for example, Harun relates that Imam al-Sadiq (A) has said:

> The worshippers are three. A group worships God the Exalted out of fear, and that is the worship of the slaves. Another group worships God the Exalted seeking reward, and that is the devotion of the mercenaries. And a group worships God the Exalted because they love Him, and that is the devotion of the

noble, which is the best kind of worship.[41]

In *Nahj al-Balaghah*, it is also written that 'some worship God out of desire, that is the devotion of the merchants; some others worship God out of fear, that is the devotion of the slaves; and there are others who worship God out of gratitude, and that is the devotion of the noble.'[42] In a *hadith* in *Al-'Ilal*, *Al-Majalis*, and *Al-Khisal*,[43] Yunis also relates that Imam al-Sadiq (A) has said:

> People worship God in three ways: a group worships Him for His reward, which is the devotion of the covetous, and it is but greed; some others worship Him out of fear of the Fire, which is the devotion of the slaves, and it is but fear; but I worship Him because I love Him, and that is the worship of the honourable, for God the Exalted says: 'They shall be secure from terror on that day' (27:89), and also 'Say, if you love God, then follow me; and God will love you' (3:31). For he who loves God the Exalted, God will love him, and he who is loved by God will be among the safe. This is a hidden station that 'No one touches...except the pure ones.' (56:79)

It is also mentioned in *Al-Manaqib* that the Messenger of God used to cry until he fainted. Then he was asked, 'Has God not pardoned your previous and future sins?' He answered: 'Should I not be a grateful servant?'[44] I say gratitude and love refer to the same thing, for gratitude is praising the beautiful for being beautiful, and so worship is to turn and show submission to God the Exalted. He is beautiful by essence, and so He is sought for Himself and

[41] *Al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 84; *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 67, p. 236.

[42] *Nahj al-Balaaghah*, sermon 237.

[43] *Al-'Ilal al-Sharayi'*, vol. 1, p. 12; *Al-Khisal*, p. 188; *Mishkat al-Anwar*, p. 220; *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 67, p. 198; *Al-Safi*, vol. 3, p. 353.

[44] Ibn Shahr Ashub's *Al-Manaqib*, vol. 1, p. 201; *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 10, p. 40; *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 17, p. 257-8; *Al-Ihtijaj*, vol. 1, p. 326.

not for any other thing, as God the Exalted says: 'I did not create the jinn and humans except that they may worship Me' (51:58). So, the final end of their creation or the perfection of their existence is to worship Him the Exalted and to turn to Him alone. Even the act of turning to Him is only a means and not an end by itself, for He alone is the purpose of their existence, and accordingly worship in this verse has been interpreted in *hadith*s as knowledge. God the Exalted also says: 'Your Lord has decreed that you shall not worship anyone except Him' (17:23), and 'He is the Living One, and there is no god except Him. So, supplicate to Him, putting faith in Him exclusively' (40:65).

Love, on the other hand, is the attraction of the soul to the beautiful for the sake of it being beautiful, and to Him belongs absolute beauty. God the Exalted says: 'Say if you love God, then follow me,' and 'The faithful have a more ardent love for God' (2:165). (Refer to the *hadith* of Al-Daylami in Chapter 5.) In the Supplication of Kumayl, Imam 'Ali (A) says: 'And make my heart full of your love.'[45] In his famous supplication, Imam 'Ali also states: 'O God! Assign me a position among your friends, the position of one who hopes for the increase of your love.'[46] The discourse of love is repeated frequently in prayers.

However, there is nothing stranger than what some say: that love in reality does not belong to God the Exalted, and what is mentioned of love in the religious law is metaphorical, intending obedience to God's His commands and prohibitions. This is a denial of what is evident, and contrary to what is necessary. Indeed how great is the difference between those who say love does not belong to the Exalted God and those who say love belongs only to

[45] *Al-Sahifah al-'Alawiyyah al-Jami'ah*, 399.
[46] *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 98, p. 98; *Nahj al-Sa'adah*, vol. 6, p. 145.

God the Exalted.[47]

To go back to our discussion, devotion, which is man's turning to God the Exalted, cannot be realised without knowledge. It is true that worship is a preliminary or a ground for knowledge, yet knowledge is necessary for true devotion, though they are interrelated, as Isma'il ibn Jabir in a *hadith* relates that Imam al-Sadiq (A) has said: 'Knowledge is linked to practice, so he who knows practises, and he who practises knows.'[48] In other words, devotion must be accompanied by knowledge so that it results in knowledge, as mentioned in the Prophetic *hadith*: 'He who practises what he knows, God will grant him the knowledge of what he knows not.'[49] This is of course an interpretation of God's words 'Whoever desires the tillage of the Hereafter, We will enhance for him his tillage, and whoever desires the tillage of the world, We will give it to him, but he will have no share in the Hereafter' (42:20). As you see, the difference between the two rewards is clear. 'To Him ascends the good word, and He elevates righteous conduct' (35:10). Conceptual reflection also confirms this view, for love and yearning for a certain thing make the person

[47] Some *hadiths* very clearly talk about God's love towards his servants, such as: 'No servant of Mine seeks proximity to Me by anything more loved by Me than what I have made obligatory on him, and he certainly comes close to Me by supererogatory worships, until I love him. Then when I love him, I become his ear by which he hears, his eye by which he sees, his tongue by which he speaks, and his hand by which he grasps. If he calls Me I answer him, and if he requests from Me I grant him' (M. H. Al-Hurr al-'Amili, *Al-Jawahir al-Saniyyah* (Baghdad: n.p., 1964), p. 121). This *hadith* is known as a 'treasured *hadith*' (*hadith al-kanz*) which has been reported in different Shi'a books and which Islamic mystics have discussed in their works with various interpretations. [SKT]

[48] *Al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 44; *Mishkat al-Anwar*, p. 243; *'Uddat al-Da'i*, p. 69, *Munyat al-Murid*, p. 181; *Awali al-Liyali*, vol. 4, p. 67.

[49] *Al-Mizan*, vol. 7, p. 339; *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 40, p. 128.

attracted to it, and attraction – which is nothing but the soul's action – intensifies that love and yearning which is knowledge. On the other hand, knowledge intensifies the existence of a thing, and once the existence of a thing is intensified, its effects and all that relates and belongs to it will have a complete manifestation.[50]

The knowledge that is necessary for practice is gained in two ways: exploring the world (through the macrocosm) and introspection (through the microcosm). The former involves reflection and contemplation and knowing those worldly things which exist outside the soul, such as the creation of God and His signs in heaven and earth, so that one may have certainty and firm belief in God and His Names and Acts, for they are effects and indications, and knowing the indications leads necessarily to knowing what is indicated. The latter, however, refers to going back to the soul and knowing the Exalted God through it, for the soul

[50] This delicate philosophical point is based on Mulla Sadra's doctrine on knowledge. According to Sadra, human knowledge (*'ilm*) is a distinct mode of existence (*nahw al-wujud*). Unlike his predecessors, Sadra does not regard perception as the 'imprinting' of a direct image of an 'object' of knowing onto the mind, or as a passive process. Rather 'knowledge' for him is understood as the existential creation and production of the intelligible forms of what is known through the human mind's inherent creativity and activity. This kind of knowledge, as a creation of the individual human soul, is a mode of that particular soul's existence, so it is not separate from the existence and essence of the knower, but is incorporated into his existence. This means that he takes knowledge to be one of the primary categories of being. Based on the gradational intensifying order of existence, knowledge (as with existence) has different levels of reality, so it has different levels of possession, beauty, and existential perfection. Each human existence attains its perfection gradually as its knowledge and perceptions increase and as its existential level upgrades; more knowledge leads to more existential perfection. [SKT]

is not independent in its existence, and knowing that will necessarily lead to knowing that independent Being who sustains it. In other words, the two kinds of knowledge, in one respect, are one.

Those are the two ways, but the truth is that exploring the universe alone leads to neither true knowledge nor true devotion, for worldly beings acquire knowledge because they are works and signs, but that knowledge would be acquired knowledge of the Creator's existence and His attributes. This kind of knowledge applies to a proposition with a subject and a predicate, which are but two concepts. But God the Exalted, as it is demonstrated, is a pure Existence with no quiddity, and therefore cannot enter the mind; for any quiddity in its essence is devoid of the two kinds of existence, but in reality it exists by an external existence now and by a mental existence then, which concerning God cannot be true. Therefore, everything that the mind conceives and considers necessary and judges by any predicate of names and attributes is no doubt other than God the Exalted.[51] 'Abd al-Ala precisely refers to this

[51] The author refers to a famous proof for the existence of God. It is called the 'proof of the righteous' (*burhan al-siddiqin*). There are many proofs maintained by Islamic philosophers for the existence of God which they each called the 'proof of the righteous'. *Kalam* cosmological proofs began with the intuition of phenomenal existence requiring a cause; there was a creation which needed a cause to be. There had to be a reason why there was something rather than nothing. Ibn Sina gave a distinctive argument (in more than one form) for the existence of God. His proof began with the concept of existence, preceded by a modal distinction between necessity and contingent, and arrived at the exigency of a Necessary Being. Nasir al-Din Tusi provided a typology of three proofs for the existence of a Creator, which in turn are: the *kalam* cosmological argument, the proof from motion that derives from Aristotle's *Physics*, and the Avicennan ontological argument. Having explained and criticised all proofs, Mulla Sadra asserts that his argument is the real 'proof of the

point in a *hadith* related in *Tawhid al-Saduq* that Imam al-Sadiq (A) has said:

> He who claims he knows God by a veil or a form or an image is a polytheist, for each of the veils, forms, and images are other than Him; He is One and known as One, so how can he who knows Him by other than Him be a monotheist? Indeed he knows God who knows Him by Him. He who does not know Him by Him has not known Him, and he knows other than Him. There is no similitude between the Creator and the creature, and God has created things from nothing. He is called by His names, but He is other than His names, and the names are not Him, for the described Being is other than the description. So he who claims that he believes in that which he knows not, knows nothing. No creature perceives a thing unless by God. God is separate from His creatures, and His creatures are separate from Him.[52]

The expression 'He is One and known as One' – that is, He is absolutely and purely One and there is no diversity in Him – points to the argument that knowing others is not necessary for knowing Him. To explain, knowledge and the known object by essence are one, as has been demonstrated in its place, and therefore our knowledge of a thing cannot be the same knowledge of another and different thing, for

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righteous', because in his argument, a 'thing' is demonstrated through itself, and a 'path' is identical with the 'goal'. In other arguments, the 'Truth' is attained from other than itself – for example, from the possible to the necessary, from the originated to the eternal Origin, from motion to the unmoved Mover, or from the soul to Him. He believes that his version of the 'proof of the righteous' is clearer, nobler, and more convincing than the versions of other philosophers' because it is based only on the reality of existence rather than any other concepts. [SKT]

[52] *Tawhid al-Saduq*, p. 143, 192; *Al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 114; *Tuhaf al-'Uqul*, vol. 1, p. 32.

in that case the two different things would be one, which is absurd. Indeed if knowledge of one thing necessarily resulted in knowledge of another thing, the two things would have been one. But since we have assumed them to be two, they would be one in one respect and different in another respect. Each of them then would have two aspects, but the Exalted God is One, simple and immaterial in essence, non-composite and, therefore, cannot be known by other than Him.[53] It is to this point that Imam al-Sadiq (A) refers: 'There is no similitude between the Creator and the creature.'

His saying 'He who claims he believes in that which he knows not, knows nothing' branches off of his words 'Indeed he knows God who knows Him by Him.' On the other hand, his saying 'No creature perceives anything unless by God' is an offered argument, for when everything is known by God, Who is the light of the heavens and

[53] Tabataba'i was inspired by Mulla Sadra's 'proof of the righteous'. The heart of Sadra's argument is as follows: Existence is a single, objective and simple reality, and there is no difference between its parts, except in terms of perfection and imperfection, strength and weakness, and the culmination of its perfection. The culmination of its perfection is where there is nothing more perfect and it is independent from any other thing. Nothing more perfect should be conceivable, as every imperfect thing belongs to another thing and needs to become perfect. Perfection is prior to imperfection, actuality to potency, and existence to non-existence, and the perfection of a thing is the thing itself, and not a thing in addition to it. Thus, either existence is independent of others, or it is in need of others. The former is the Necessary, which is pure existence. Nothing is more perfect than Him. And in Him there is no room for non-existence or imperfection. The latter is other than Him and is regarded as His acts and effects, and for other than Him there is no subsistence except through Him. For there is no imperfection in the reality of existence, and imperfection is added to existence only because of the quality of being caused, as it is impossible for an effect to be identical with its cause in terms of existence. [SKT]

earth, how can He be known by others? He is the Sustainer of every essence that is dependent, and knowledge of the dependent in essence naturally comes after knowledge of the independent that sustains it. For knowledge requires the independence of the known object, and knowledge of the dependent comes after the independent it accompanies. However, because that might smack of incarnation or unity, God is exalted above such attributes. Imam al-Sadiq (A) adds: 'God is separate from His creatures, and His creatures are separate from Him.'

Moreover, the view that man perceives everything by God is not incompatible with the view expressed at the beginning of the *hadith*, that is, knowledge of one thing does not result in knowledge of another thing, for the knowledge mentioned at the beginning of the *hadith* is acquired knowledge, and what comes at the end is intuitive or knowledge by presence. On the other hand, the *hadith*s that deny conceptual knowledge as true knowledge are many.[54] For by now it is clear that – save self-knowledge –

[54] Tabataba'i, inspired by transcendent philosophy throughout his works, denies the theories that consider knowledge a process of abstraction, as well as those which consider knowledge a relation between the knower and the known, as is found in the works of Fakhr al-Razi. The reality of knowledge is the complete presence of the object known to the knower.

The Peripatetics and their followers (who followed Aristotle's doctrine) regarded 'knowledge' as a 'psychical quality'. According to them, the mind or the perceptive faculty of the soul is like a tablet (*tabula rasa*) on which the precepts are imprinted. These imprinted forms are as 'secondary perfections' for man and have nothing to do with his essence. As mentioned above, unlike the majority of philosophers, Mulla Sadra does not regard perception as the 'imprinting' of a direct image of an object in the mind, and as a passive process. Rather, he considers it as the creation and production of the forms of objects through the mind's creativity and activity. The sensible forms and the impressions of senses in the

none of these ways leads to true knowledge. Only self-knowledge results in such knowledge; it stresses that man should turn his face to the Exalted God and concentrate on his soul by weaning it from every distraction until he sees his soul as it is, dependent in its essence on the Exalted God. Evidently, such a person will see his soul and his Sustainer simultaneously; when he sees God the Exalted, he will know Him through necessary knowledge and will also know his self by Him truly – for his soul is dependent in its essence on the Exalted God – and then he will know everything by Him. In a *hadith* in *Tuhaf al-'Uqul*, Imam al-Sadiq (A) refers to this point, saying:

> He who claims he knows God by the imaginings of the heart is a polytheist, and he who asserts he knows God by name rather than meaning admits his unpleasant speech, for the name is created in time. Moreover, he who says he worships both name and meaning has associated with God a partner; he who states he worships by turning to attributes rather than understanding has gone too far. He who claims he worships the attribute and the described being has cancelled monotheism, for the attribute is other than the described being. He who claims he adds the described being to the attribute has diminished the status of the great, and 'They did not regard God with

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process of perception serve only as tools to prepare the soul and the mind for gaining the acquired knowledge, that is, creating a form and quiddity similar and corresponding to what is in the external reality. Based on this doctrine, 'knowledge' is not considered as an accident and the mind as a substratum. Knowledge is a creature of the human soul and a mode of the soul's existence; therefore, it cannot be regarded as a separate entity from the 'knower'. Thus, man's soul attains perfection gradually as his knowledge and perceptions increase and his existential level upgrades, like a building which is completed as its bricks are laid (see *Asfar*, vol. 3, p. 327-328). [SKT]

the regard due to Him' (6:91).

Then the Imam was asked, 'What is the approach of monotheism then?' He answered: 'The gate of investigation is open, and finding a solution is possible. Indeed the essence of the present must be known before His attributes, but the attribute of the absent must be known before His essence.' Then he was asked, 'How can one know the essence of the present before his attributes?' The Imam (A) answered:

> You know Him and you know His signs; you know your soul by Him rather than through yourself. You know all that it has is His and dependent on Him, as they said to Joseph, 'Are you really Joseph?' and he answered, 'I am Joseph, and this is my brother' (12:90). So, they knew him by him and did not know him by others, nor did they identify him by themselves through the imaginings of their heart.[55]

By signs in 'you know His signs,' the Imam means His Names and attributes which you should know by Him, and you should also know your soul by Him and no other.[56]

If one looks deeply into this invaluable *hadith*, especially the Imam's analogy of how Joseph's brothers knew him, all the principles mentioned in previous chapters can be seen to have been reflected in this *hadith* alone, and therefore there is no need for further explanation. In short, if man sees his Lord, he knows Him and knows his soul and everything by Him, and then devotion is made possible and finds its true place; otherwise, whenever we turn to Him, we will only imagine one of the things. This imagined concept or mental image and the corresponding imagined limited concept would be other than the Exalted God, and the

[55] *Tuhaf al-'Uqul*, p. 326, 328.

[56] Here, given the context of the *hadith*, we have translated 'signs' as Names and Attributes, not 'knowledge'. [Translator]

worshipped would not be the intended God.

This is the state of worship among those divine scholars who are not really knowers of God, and if such devotion – now that you know the nature of true devotion – is accepted, it is only because of God's grace. God says: 'Were it not for God's grace and His mercy upon you, not one of you would ever be pure' (24:21). However, the devotion of the sincere divine knowers is different, for in their worship they turn to neither a concept nor to what the concept corresponds, but to the Lord, lofty is His greatness and magnificent is His might. God says: 'Glory be to God above that they describe, except for God's sincere servants' (37:159-160). From this it is understood that the sincere are those who are made pure for God the Exalted, so that no veil remains between them and Him, or their description would not be true. Besides, since people themselves are the veil – as Imam Musa ibn Ja'far al-Kazim (A) says: 'There is no veil between Him and His people other than His people'[57] – they do not see the people but aim at God the Exalted. It is also stated in *Tafsir al-'Askari*:

> Imam Muhammad ibn 'Ali al-Baqir (A) has said: 'The servant would not worship God as He should be worshipped unless he turns aside from all people and devotes himself to Him; only then He would say "This is only for Me," and He would accept it by His bounty.'[58]

Imam Ja'far ibn Muhammad al-Sadiq (A) also says: 'The greatest of God's blessings for a servant is to make his heart hold none but God.'[59] Imam Muhammad ibn 'Ali al-Jawad

[57] *Tawhid al-Saduq*, p. 179; *Sharh al-Asma' al-Husna*, vol. 1, p. 26; *Nur al-Barahin*, vol. 1, p. 437; *Mizan al-Hikmah*, vol. 3, p. 1880.

[58] *Tafsir al-'Askari*, p. 328; *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 77, p. 111.

[59] *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 69, p. 343; *Mustadrak al-Wasa'il*, vol. 1, p. 101; *Al-Safi*, vol. 1, p. 150.

(A) states: 'The best worship is sincerity.'[60]

By now we also have a better understanding of Iblis's vow reported in the Holy Qur'an: 'By Your might, I will surely pervert them, except Your sincere servants among them' (38:82-83), and also God's saying: 'They will indeed be arraigned [before Him] – all except God's sincere servants' (37:127-128). For the sincere servants of God are drowned in His Majesty and see neither Iblis nor his temptation, nor will they be summoned nor stand waiting, which these divine *hadiths* refer to: 'My friends are under My cloak', 'My friends are in My garment', and also the *hadith* of Yunis, already mentioned.

Accordingly, self-knowledge is the way to this end, and it is the nearest way whereby man by deserting others and turning to God absorbs himself in self-knowledge,[61] as

[60] *Tafsir al-'Askari*, p. 329; *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 70, p. 245; *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 67, p. 245; *'Uddat al-Da'i*, p. 219.

[61] The basis of this idea is the concept of 'knowledge by presence'. The concept of 'knowledge by presence' (*hudur*) undercuts the very foundations of the representational theory of knowledge and casts the whole controversial story of knowledge in terms of being (*wujud*) and its role in understanding metaphysical realities. 'Knowledge by presence' is nothing except the unity of the existence of the object known with the existence of the knowing subject. This is what is ultimately referred to in the theory of 'the unification of the intelligent [the knower] with the intelligible object' or 'the unification of the knowing subject with the object known' which was posed for the first time by Mulla Sadra and which Tabataba'i supported. According to this principle, knowledge is the presence of an abstract (*mujarrad*) being (the object known) for the soul (the knowing subject). Actuality and abstract go together just as potentiality and matter do. When we know something, this known thing is attained for our soul by its form, not by its matter and corporeal being. The form of something is the attainment and realisation of that thing itself because the reality of the thing is its form, not its matter. The link between this epistemological principle and the issue of self-realisation is that the perceptions or conceptions

understood from the saying of Imam Musa al-Kazim (A):

> There is no veil between Him and His people other than His people, for He has neither veiled Himself with any obstructing veil nor covered Himself with a hindering cover.[62]

This blessed *hadith* is the most beautiful expression of the best way. So, man begins to desert others and turn to God through practices sanctioned by the religious law, such as penitence, repentance, introspection, vigilance, silence, hunger, seclusion, keeping vigil, and fighting against the self by righteous deeds and acts of worship. He further reinforces these practices with reflection and contemplation until they make his soul separate from all things and turn

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that are obtained both through intellection and sensation are never separated from one's essence, nor are they different from one's individual being and substance. This means that which man essentially perceives only exists in his essence, not in something else. The soul as an actual substance by essence knows itself in the manner of 'knowledge by presence'. This kind of knowledge is nothing but the very being and essence of the soul itself. The key point here is that, according to this doctrine, 'knowledge by presence' does not limit itself to the human soul's knowledge of its own self. Indeed, it includes knowledge of the soul, its effects, and its cause. So when it is said that the soul knows itself, it means that *all existential aspects* of the soul in its wholeness including all its positions, characteristics, affections, powers, faculties, and finally its cognitions are *present* to the soul.

When the soul knows something, it implies that it is conscious of its own existence and reality as the knowing subject (*'alim* or *'aqil*). This same soul-self consciousness or 'soul-object consciousness' is known as 'knowledge by presence'. In other words, based on the unification of the knower and known object, one's knowledge of one's self is nothing but one's existence, by means of which all the states, functions, activities, and concepts of the soul are recognised or performed. [SKT]

[62] *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 3, p. 327.

to God and witness a light from the Unseen followed by some divine breaths and Lordly attractions, inducing love and illumination together. That is called remembrance. This is followed by gleaming lights, escalating ecstasy, and impelling yearning until the Lord, the source of love, settles in his heart and remembrance prevails over his soul; until God induces union and ends the affair, for 'The final end is toward your Lord' (53:42).

Know further that the likeness of this traveller is that of a person who is taking the road to reach his destination; he must remember the destination, know the way as much as he can travel it, and take as much provision as he needs. If he forgets his destination a moment, he will wander in bewilderment ever farther from his destination. Moreover, if he is distracted by the way, its appearance or trappings, he would not move on and would remain stationary, and if he also takes more provision than what he needs, his travelling will be hindered and he will not reach his destination. Anyway, he should call upon God the Exalted for assistance. Now you may say even if the long discussion proves that the nearest way to God the Exalted is the way of self-knowledge,[63] it still does not prove there is any special

[63] Anyone who does not have self-realisation does not have a soul, for the existence of the soul is identical with light, presence, and consciousness. It is only by this consciousness that one sees the realities of the world, but most people want to find the truth through their vain intellects and bodily senses. Besides the bodily eye and ear, with which people see and hear but which are considered unreal, people also have another eye and ear which are real. They are the eye and ear of the heart and result from the light of knowledge. The greatest victory and the highest success for an individual and the first step to understand the realities in the higher realms is to obtain self-knowledge and realisation because when the individual thoroughly and meticulously examines the book of the soul, he will reach the point where he finds the Lord Almighty. He will then discover his position before Him and recognise that he is poor and helpless

explanation in the religious law showing the way of taking or following it and the affairs related to its travelling despite all its subtlety, its importance and its many horrors and perils, and the magnitude of its death and destruction. So, why is there no full explanation of all these particulars, an explanation that might distinguish between the causes of delivery and destruction?

In answer, I say (as was mentioned in the second chapter of this treatise) that the different expressions of the Holy Qur'an and Prophetic Hadith are one expression, and if there is any difference, it is because of the perceivers' different understandings and perceptions. The journey to God the Exalted also results from man's understanding and perception and, therefore, differs according to his understanding and perception, which is evident. We have also mentioned there that people are divided into different groups and each group perceives and acts according to its understanding. As an example, let's imagine one of the common people who seeks this world and its ornaments and who keeps awake at night thinking about the next day's business, how to purchase and sell and where to go and whom to meet, and his entire ambition is to meet the ends and manage his worldly affairs. He hears one calling to God and giving good tidings and warnings, tidings of God's pardon and satisfaction and gardens in which they will have everlasting bounty and warnings against that fire whose fuel is people and stones and other things that God has prepared for the wrongdoers. Such a person, because of his low ambition and because he restricts his efforts to satisfying his hunger and thirst, would find no time for

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before Him, a being dependent upon the existence of God, and that there is nothing in existence except that it is God's favour bestowed upon human beings. He will also realise that all favours of God including science and knowledge are to be employed in the way of God and for His worship. [SKT]

probing the verses of God and His words; rather he would believe in a general way what he hears, and perform only those righteous deeds those which do not obstruct what he seeks of this world, for this world is his principal object and religion comes only second. Consequently, we see his deeds contradict his speech and his acts belie his knowledge. You hear him saying, 'God is All-hearing and All-seeing,' while he commits all indecencies and neglects obligatory commands. You find him believing that God is the only Sovereign and all return to Him, but at the same time he humbly obeys and worships every sovereign other than God and hastens to every Satan calling him to the pains of Hell as soon as he feels he can obtain a little of the ornaments of this world. Moreover, he sees nothing beyond the corporeal world. If you try to make him understand that there is something beyond these illusions, he will not understand.

He believes that God has a throne from which He issues His orders to His creatures, which are executed by His angels in the heavens and the earth, that belong to Him. The rational creatures are His subjects, and they are but these sensible bodies. He has commanded them to fulfil some duties voluntarily in this world, and God will make them die and reduce them to nothing after their existence. Then He will come to this ruined world on the day when He will bring people to life and gather them for the Day of Assembly. He will reward the righteous with Paradise, in which there is nothing other than the worldly desires of the self, and punish the wrongdoers with fire in which there is only flames and blazes, in the same way that the kings among us do so, procuring the trappings of glory and might, executing orders and punishing subjects, and managing the kingdom. This is the first group of people and their position in act and knowledge.

Now let's imagine one of the pious, a devotee who looks prudently into the transience of the world and its

ornaments and illusory charms and the subsistence of all that belongs to God the Exalted, those who have the ability to practise piety and devotion. When he hears the call of the Real inviting him to distance himself from the lie of worldly appetites and to turn to worshipping God to deliver himself from painful chastisement and attain endless prosperity and eternal kingdom, the fear of God will capture his heart, and he will constantly see the image of death before his eyes. Consequently, he will banish the love of this world and concern over livelihood from his heart, and his only ambition will be self-denial or righteous deeds for the sake of God, seeking His satisfaction. He would further purify the habits of his soul, set right the different aspects of his deeds and fear doing anything that causes God's anger. He will seek His eternal blessing and avoid everlasting chastisement.

However, if you consider well the purpose of his spiritual struggle, you will see he seeks only his soul's desire, for he loves his soul, and when he hears the Real, saying it was created for subsistence rather than annihilation, he loves it and its desires, and scorns the world because it is transient and perishing. Even if this world had remained eternally with its people and its blessings and joys without any of its miseries, nothing would have diminished the determination of this pious practitioner. Accordingly, we may infer that for this man perfection is the soul's desire for worldly and physical blessings. However, he finds the world associated with defects and obstacles and, therefore, he seeks desires of its kind but free from its defects. So, he views the Hereafter as one of the fields of this world and its strongholds, and believes the Day of Judgment is one of its days.

His soul is confined to this corporeal state and ascends no higher because he imagines there is nothing higher; nor does he seek perfection nobler than corporeal perfection, for he neither knows nor believes in such perfection.

Therefore, he does not rise to the position of knowing God and stays in the state of practice, moving around between different states of life and words, deeds, and good temper. He imagines the veil of the Unseen is lifted from him, revealing the secrets behind the veil and leaving nothing hidden from his eyes, but this is not true. Indeed he has no hope of seeing what is behind the veil, and so he has prepared himself to see it after death. He is a man of righteous deeds and abundant reward, but nothing higher than these: 'Were God to expand the provision for His servants, they would surely create havoc on the earth. But He sends down in a precise measure whatever He wishes. Indeed He is all-aware, all-seeing about His servants' (42:27). This is another group and that is their position in knowledge and practice; they are similar to the first group in knowledge but differ in practice.

But consider one of the eager lovers, one captivated by the glimmer of love and enchanted by the desire of meeting God the Exalted, how he is powerless outside and perturbed inside, and his heart is bewildered and his intellect is distracted. He escapes the world and its ornaments, and his ambition is not confined to the Hereafter and its blessings. Indeed the lover's only religion is the Beloved, and his single purpose is God, for he has heard God the Exalted saying to his servants: 'Do not let the life of the world deceive you, nor let the Deceiver deceive you concerning God' (31:33) and also 'The life of the world is just play and diversion' (48:36). He duly scorns the world and its vanities and refrains from its ornaments, for God the Exalted scorns it. Had God praised it, He would have praised it despite its transience and baseness. On the other hand, when he hears God the Exalted saying 'The abode of the Hereafter is indeed life' (29:64), he praises the Hereafter, for God the Exalted praises it, and had He blamed it, he would have blamed it despite its permanence and grandeur. He also listens to God the Exalted saying:

Is it not sufficient that your Lord is witness to all things? (42:53)

He indeed comprehends all things. (42:54)

He is with you whatever you may be. (57:4)

He sustains every soul in spite of what it earns. (13:33)

There would be nothing unless his heart is attached to it and his soul is devoted to it, not for his worldly pleasure (*la'b*) – for what has the eager lover to do with material desires? – but because his Exalted Lord sees all deeds. He is close to, accompanies, witnesses, and encompasses everything. So he moves towards God the Exalted, not alone, but by means of other things.[64]

Moreover, when he hears God saying 'O you who have faith! Take care of your own soul. He who goes astray cannot hurt you if you are guided' (5:105), he realises that his attachment to his soul is not like his attachment to other things, and that his main objective is to find his way to his Beloved, Who has helped him to move towards Him, for God says: 'O man! You are labouring toward your Lord laboriously, and you will encounter Him' (84:6). Finally, when he hears Him saying 'Whoever turns away from the remembrance of his Lord, He will let him proceed towards an escalating chastisement' (72:17), 'Whoever turns a blind eye to the remembrance of the All-beneficent, We assign him a devil who remains his companion. Indeed they bar them from the way while they suppose that they are rightly

[64] When the lover hears these verses, he will pay attention to everything and love it – not for sport or material pleasure, but because all things are the creatures and signs of his beloved. The lover does not think of any pleasure except the pleasure of being with his beloved and attracting His contentment. He cares for His creatures because he knows that His beloved pays attention to His creatures and loves them. In this way, the lover tries to get close (*qurb*) to his beloved. [SKT]

guided' (43:37), and 'Do not be like those who forget God, so He makes them forget their own souls' (59:19) – knowing that forgetfulness means turning away from remembrance – he understands that forgetting himself and attachment to things are the symptoms of forgetting his Lord. Omission of his Lord's remembrance and occupying himself with things would lead him to increasing pain (there is no pain for the lovers[65] other than the veil of separation and remoteness from the Beloved) and his companions would mislead him. He learns then that the way to his Lord is his soul and his reflection on it, for his Lord is with him and sees and encompasses him. Knowing that he shuns everything except his soul, he reflects on it, purifies it, and refines it with the best moral traits and righteous deeds. He further avoids fatal sins and flees the causes of destruction, because God the Exalted commands these and loves them,

[65] The original Arabic term for 'loved' is derived from the root *hubb*, which means to like or to love. In other words, *hubb* is a general concept that can belong to simple things, such as preferring some types of food, or to the most important things in one's life, such as the intense desire for someone or some ideals of the beloved, to the extent that one might even be ready to be destroyed in order to please the beloved or secure it. *Hubb* in such cases can be translated as 'love'. There is another term in Islamic culture which is sometimes used in Arabic and more commonly in Persian to mean intense love: *'ishq*. There is also *wudd*, which means mostly friendship and affection. For more about the concept of *hubb* in the Islamic tradition see Ibn al-Babawayh, *Tawhid al-Saduq*, rev. Qadi Sa'id al-Qumi, ed. Najafquli Habibi (Tehran: Vizarat-i Farhang va Irshad-i Islami, 1415), vol. 1, p. 414-415.

In this treatise, 'Allamah Tabataba'i has used the term '*hubb*' not '*ishq*'. In the Qur'an and Islamic traditions, we can only find the concept of *mahabbah*, which is used for the mutual mystical and divine relation between God and the whole universe in general, and between God and man in particular. In Islamic mysticism, *'ishq*, as a term of closer equivalence to the notion of 'love', was replaced with the notion of *mahabbah*. [SKT]

and not because of his eagerness for Paradise or fear of the Fire; rather he observes all of these for the sake of God and expects neither reward nor gratitude.[66]

If he is attached to his soul, it is only for the sake of meeting his Lord. He concentrates on his soul and turns his heart to it day and night but gives it no independence or power. How can a true lover love two beloveds or seek two targets? for the Beloved is loved for Himself, and the lover loves everything because of Him, Who is loved in Himself and in others. Evidently, the lover seeks only the Beloved and ignores everything that hinders him from Him and avoids everything that distracts him from Him. His only concern is to be alone with Him and to penetrate all the veils to reach Him. The more he listens to His attributes, the greater his love and the fire of his longing become, and sometimes his love reaches such an extreme that he transcends his self and becomes totally occupied with his Lord; there and then remains only the Face of his Lord, majestic and munificent. This is the third group and their

[66] According to Islamic mystical thought, *'ishq* is the highest reason for creation. In the early Islamic theology, a heated debate started on the purpose behind God's creations and acts. Some theologians thought that the attribution of a reason or purpose for His deeds leads to the assumption that God has a goal for Himself, and He creates things to meet His goal, just as a human being works to reach his own personal goals. However, the dominant view among Islamic philosophers is that God Himself does not gain anything from His creatures, nor from His act of creation. This is not only because He is completely free from any sort of need, but also because it is logically impossible that a given effect would have any type of influence on its (existential) cause. God has not created the universe to produce something of benefit for Himself, but rather to give benefit. According to Islamic mysticism, the reason for creation is that God loves to be known. There is a famous sacred saying (*al-hadith al-qudsi*) in which God says: 'I was a hidden treasure; I loved to be known. Hence I created the world so that I would be known.' [SKT]

position in knowledge and practice.

By now, it is clear that the real difference between these three groups is the state of their perception; in other words, they understand from one speech two or three different meanings. So, it is not the duty of the religious law to explain the way, and it is the difference in understanding that makes people different. When one of my masters was asked about the way of self-knowledge, why it was not explained by the religious law – despite that it is the nearest way to God the Exalted – he said: 'But where is the expression in the religious law that does not aim at this purpose and does not explain this way?' Accordingly, the interpretation of some verses and *hadith*s given by some people of this group is perhaps above the common understanding. Nevertheless, it is necessary to know that this way comprises act and abandonment, or turning to God the Exalted and turning down all others, and these two come together and are interrelated, for, as was said already, knowledge of God is the most evident, and what veils people from it is negligence rather than ignorance, which happens due to engagement in the vain and transient things of the base world, for 'God has not put two hearts within any man' (33:4). Engagement in the world induces its love and absorbs all attention, as a consequence of which the whole heart will be occupied, and its mirror will not be clear enough either to reflect the beauty of the Real or bring about knowledge, for the whole thing depends on the heart.[67]

[67] In this paragraph, Tabataba'i underlines the importance of knowledge (*ma'rifah*) as the first step for any real love of the divine. Love is a stage whose prerequisite is knowledge (*ma'rifah*). According to Islamic mysticism, the last stations of the mystical path are divine knowledge and love (*ma'rifah* and *mahabbah*). Sometimes they are considered complementary to each other, sometimes love is regarded as superior, and at other times knowledge is considered higher. In

To examine the truth of what is said above, you could choose an empty place that offers no additional distraction of light, sound, furniture, etc. Then sit down and do not engage yourself with any unnecessary act, close your eyes and concentrate on a single image. That is, turn the eye of your imagination to image A, for example, and be careful to turn down any other image which crosses your mind in order to concentrate on image A. At the beginning you will see many imaginary pictures cross and crowd your mind, which are dark and confused, and many of them cannot be distinguished from each other. They are related to your thoughts during the day and night and your purposes and decisions, so that you may wake up after one hour and find

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fact, love is a very dominant stage in spiritual attainment, but love substantially is in need of knowledge. Knowledge creates *ma'rifah*, and *ma'rifah* provides love. Therefore, since the reason for loving something is nothing other than the *ma'rifah* of the lover of beauty and perfection, or more generally, the goodness of the beloved, the greatest possible love is certainly that of God Himself and at the second stage, the love of others for this Existent. So, the best reason for creating the universe is to be Known and Beloved by the lovers. God is the most beautiful and the most perfect being and His apprehension is also the best, so His love and His joy are the most intense. Ibn Sina expressed this idea in his philosophical language as follows: 'The necessary existent (*al-wajib al-wujud*) Who has the highest perfection, beauty and brightness and perceives of Himself as so with complete perception...is in Himself the greatest lover and the greatest beloved and has the greatest joy because He Himself causes the greatest joy...' (Ibn Sina, *Al-Shifa', Al-Ilahiyyat*, (Qum: Maktabat al-Najafi al-Mar'ashi, 1983) p. 369). In volume 3 of his *Al-Isharat*, he also says: 'The being that has the greatest joy in respect to something is the First (*al-awwal*) in respect to Himself, since He has the greatest understanding and has the greatest perfection. He is free from contingency and non-existence that are sources of all evils, and nothing can occupy Him so that He is neglectful. True love is the joy which is caused by the perception of the presence of something' (p. 359). [SKT]

out that you are in such a place or in the company of such a person or engaged in such a deed, though you had concentrated with the eye of your imagination on image A, and no doubt this confusion will not leave you for some time.

If you continue with cleansing the heart of interfering pictures for a few days, you will see after a while that those uncalled thoughts and ideas become less and less, and your imagination will be so enlightened that you begin to see what crosses your heart of these thoughts as if with the physical eye, and so on they will be less and less every day until no other picture remains with picture A. With that, you will know the truth of what we have said; that is, involvement in worldly affairs makes you forget yourself and ignore what transcends this world, and accordingly turning to the interior comes in the wake of leaving the exterior for what is beyond it. Now if you try to see, for example, your soul in the same way, you will come across interfering thoughts as many times as those mentioned above, which are the pictures of worldly desires and purposes. Therefore, your only way is to purify the heart from this world and all veils, for whatever mentioned of the means of constant vigilance, seclusion, and so on serves only to bring about this spiritual state, so that you may turn with your heart to God and be in His presence, Exalted be His Name. This is the meaning of remembrance, namely to be in His presence, which is the last key, and God is the only Guide. And know that remembrance in this meaning is recurrently mentioned in the Holy Qur'an and the Hadith. God the Exalted says: 'Do not obey him whose heart We have made oblivious to Our remembrance' (18:28), and 'Remember God as you would remember your fathers or even a more ardent remembrance' (2:200). It is clear that the word 'more' does not intend the verbal remembrance. God the Exalted says further: 'No one takes admonition except him who returns penitently to God' and 'None takes

admonition except those who possess intellect' (2:269). There are many other verses in this respect, and some of the *hadiths* dealing with remembrance have been mentioned already. In the Supplication of Kumayl, Imam 'Ali (A) also says:

> O God! I beseech You by Your right and holiness and the greatest of Your attributes and Names to make my times during night and day thriving with Your remembrance and joined in Your service and my deeds meet with Your acceptance, until all my deeds and recitations become one prayer and in my state I be eternally in Your service.[68]

[68] *Al-Sahifat al-Alawiyyah al-Jami'ah*, p. 398-399.

5

On What Man May Attain Through Perfection

This chapter elaborates on the discussion in Chapter 2. By now, it should be clear that man's perfection lies in three types of monotheistic annihilation: monotheism in Act, Name, and Essence. It should also be understood by now that every being's proximity to God is determined by the extent of his essence and annihilation, and man's corporeal creation is linked to the Exalted Real according to the limits of his essence. So, in going to God the Exalted, man must invariably leave behind all the stages of acts, names, and essences to attain the three types of monotheism. On the other hand, since he cannot reach any of the stages of his perfection except through annihilating his self and the survival of the perfection of the soul in that stage, in each stage, he will be aware of all kinds of grace emanated from that stage to the one beneath. He will continually grasp this until he attains the monotheism of Essence, whereupon neither his name nor description will remain: 'On that day all sovereignty will belong to God' (22:56).

This argument, though brief, contains in itself all the stations of God's friends and informs of their affairs, and this is enough evidence for him who understands it. However, the quality of their stations is so high that no one

will understand it save their Lord, majestic is His Name.[1]

Supplementary Notes

It is impossible to apprehend the stations of God's friends and their particular secrets with Him the Exalted, for God

[1] God's existence as the Absolute Existence comprises the perfection and property of all things, including human souls and their existential perfection. However, in their pre-existence, prior to their bodily manifestation on earth, human beings existed in the realm of divinity in an undifferentiated unificational existence (*al-wujud al-jami'*). In this higher realm, the intellect is free from the rule of contingency and is manifested through the rays of the light of the Truth; in other words, it exists through the Truth and not through itself; but this human existence, after descending to this world, must ascend once again to its original abode and Source. To return to the realm of divinity (*malakut*), the individual human soul must accomplish its spiritual journeys in this world and beyond by passing three stages of annihilation as explained in previous chapters. In three stages, the perfected soul reaches a position in which it has no 'I-ness' (*ana'iyyah*). To achieve such a high level of existence (i.e., the Hidden Unity that is specific to His Necessary Essence (*al-ghayb al-wahdat al-mukhtassat bi-dhatihi al-wajibiyyah*)), the human soul in its upward spiritual journeys must successively pass through all the ontological stages of its preceding 'descending' journey into its earthly manifestation. When the fully realised human souls have completed all the stages of their ascending journey of Return, they will reach the stage of 'annihilation in the divine Essence' (*al-fana' fi al-dhat*) and absolute Unicity (*al-ahadiyyat al-mutlaqah*). At this culminating stage, for the fully perfected soul, the familiar earthly distinctions of divine attributes and acts like 'grace' and 'wrath' become one, and what we ordinarily view as reward and punishment are the same for it, since such dualistic conceptions are recognised as necessary expressions of the divine Unity. Thus at this culminating spiritual station, the manifest polarities of the divine attributes merge into His Unseen Essence. All that the wayfarer contemplates is the Hidden Divine Ipseity (*al-huwiyyat al-ghaybiyyat al-ilahiyyah*). [SKT]

is their Guardian, and they have lost their names and descriptions in Him. God says: 'They cannot apprehend Him in their knowledge' (20:110). It is enough honour for them that God is their Guardian, and He is their Sustainer, and He brings them the good tidings that 'The friends of God will indeed have no fear, nor will they grieve' (10:62). God introduces them as 'Those who believe and constantly guard against sins, for them is good news in the life of this world and in the Hereafter' (10:63-64). He describes them as wearing the dress of faith after wearing the dress of God-fearingness. So, it is understood that fearing God, that is, avoiding what causes God's anger, comes in the wake of belief in Him and His Messenger. We may conclude that the type of faith mentioned in this verse differs from the ordinary faith that precedes fearing God, and it emphasises regular faith because it is the prerequisite of the greater faith. For ordinary faith itself is a general admission which may be accompanied with general polytheism and other sins. God the Exalted says: 'And most of them do not believe in God, but they associate other gods with Him' (12:110). Perfect and complete belief, however, follows what is made necessary by the fundamental principles and positive laws of religion, and its meaning returns to submission to His Messenger in everything he has brought, as God the Exalted says: 'But no, by your Lord! They will not believe until they make you a judge in their disputes, then do not find within their hearts any dissent to your verdict and submit in full submission' (4:65). The meaning of submission to a person is to substitute your will with the will of him to whom you submit, so that you seek what he seeks and desire what he desires; in short, it is absolute obedience. God the Exalted states: 'Say, if you love God then follow me, and God will love you' (3:31), and 'O you who have faith! Fear God, and believe in His Messenger; He will give you a twofold portion of His mercy' (57:28). Second, belief is linked to the Messenger, and this belief is

the absolute certainty in the Exalted God and His Names and attributes, the truth of what His Messenger has brought, and also total submission and surrender to the Messenger, so that their acts are according to his acts and their aims are his aim. The Messenger is their leader, his only goal is seeking the face of God and total renunciation of the world. God the Exalted says:

> Content yourself with the company of those who supplicate their Lord morning and evening, desiring His Face, and do not lose sight of them, desiring the glitter of the life of this world. And do not obey him whose heart We have made oblivious to Our remembrance, and who follows his own desires, and whose conduct is mere profligacy. (18:28)

Of His promises to them, God the Exalted further says: 'Give good news to the faithful that they are in good standing with their Lord' (10:2). The good standing is a permanent position, and it is a common expression for a firm place, which is their rank with God the Exalted. God says: 'What is with you comes to an end, but what is with God shall last' (16:96). That is, God informs us that what He has remains eternally, neither perishing nor ending. He also announces: 'Everything will perish except His Face' (28:88). From this verse it is understood that what He has is His Face. On the other hand, since the face is not separate from the thing itself, it is His Face that He meets you with. Therefore, because of their good standing, they have a place in the glories of the Face of God, are drowned in the depth of His lights, are above the realm of actions, and are confined to no special place, for 'Wherever way you turn, there is the Face of God' (2:115), and 'All that dwells upon the earth is perishing, yet lasting is the Face of your Lord, majestic and munificent' (55:26-27). The readers of the Holy Qur'an are unanimous that 'majestic' and 'munificent' are adjectives describing the Face rather than the Lord, as it is

further attested by the verses 'Blessed is the Name of your Lord' (55:78), and 'Magnify the Name of your Lord' (87:1). These two adjectives ('majestic' and 'munificent') contain all the attributes of glory and beauty. No attribute of His high attributes or any Name of His beautiful Names is separate from those two attributes. So, God's friends are placed between and in them and retain no name or description other than His attributes and His Names. The veil is lifted from them, for there remains nothing of them or with them or other than them except His Face, majestic and munificent. Having said that, the meaning of the *hadith* becomes clear, telling of the angels coming with a letter from God to His friend in Paradise. In the letter, it is written: 'From the living Self-Subsisting king to the self-subsisting king...'. God the Exalted has promised them closeness to Him and has called them the near-stationed; He has also described the near-stationed as the 'foremost' in His saying 'And the foremost are the foremost; they are the ones brought near to God' (56:10-11) and ascribed good works to them: 'We bequeathed the Book on those of Our servants We chose; but some of them wrong themselves, some of them are average, and some are foremost in good works' (35:32). God also says:

> Indeed those who are apprehensive for the fear of their Lord, and who believe in the signs of their Lord, and who do not ascribe partners to their Lord, and who give whatever they give while their hearts tremble with awe that they are going to return to their Lord – it is they who are zealous in performing good works, and take the lead in them. (23:58-61)

He has acquitted them from all kinds of polytheism in theory and practice. Those are the true believers who become perfect by knowing God and acting for Him; they are the foremost, the near-stationed, and the firm believers. God has promised to lift the veil from their hearts. He says:

'No indeed! The record of the pious is indeed in Illiyyun, and what will show you what Illiyyun is? It is a written record, witnessed by those brought near to God' (83:18-21). Illiyyun is the transcendent world. God also states: 'Thus did We show Abraham the dominions of the heavens and the earth, that he might be of those who possess certitude' (6:75). The purpose stated here is similar to that mentioned in the verses 'Thus We established Joseph in the land, that We might teach him the interpretation of dreams' (12:21) and 'So that God may ascertain those who have faith, and that He may take witnesses from among you' (3:140), though different from the purpose of the verse 'So that mankind may not have any argument against God after the sending of the apostles' (4:165). Therefore, the verse means that the Exalted God shows His servants who possess certitude the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. He has also indicated in His saying 'All His command, when He wills something, is to say to it "Be" and it is. So glory be to Him, in whose hand is the dominion of everything, and unto whom you should be returned' (36:83). The dominion is the world of Divine Command, and it is the transcendent world. It is also mentioned in the Hadith that 'Were it not for devils that circle around the hearts of the children of Adam, they would have seen the dominion of the heavens and earth.'[2] Two other pieces of evidence showing that God the Exalted rewards certitude with seeing the dominion of the heavens and earth are the verses 'No indeed! Were you to know with certain knowledge, you would surely see hell. Again, you will surely see it with the eye of certainty' (102:5-7) and 'No indeed! Rather their hearts have been sullied by

[2] *Rasa'il al-Shahid al-Thani*, p. 138; *Awali al-Liyali*, vol. 4, p. 113; *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 59, p. 163; vol. 53, p. 332; vol. 70, p. 59; *Mustadrak Safinat al-Bihar*, vol. 8, p. 572.

what they have been earning' (83:14).[3]

God the Exalted also explains that committing sins removes the effect of belief and certitude. He says: 'They impugned them, though they were convinced in their hearts wrongfully and defiantly' (27:14) and 'Have you seen him who has taken his desire to be his god and whom God has led astray knowingly, and set a seal upon his hearing and his heart' (45:23). So, certitude and belief must be accompanied by righteous deeds so that they may produce their fruit and give their results. God says: 'To Him ascends the good word, and He elevates righteous conduct' (35:10).

To go back to our subject, God has also promised to change their life, namely their existence. He declares: 'Is he who was lifeless, then We gave him life and provided him with a light by which he walks among the people, like one who dwells in a manifold darkness which he cannot leave?'

[3] This holy verse shows that God's signs which are veiled and are hidden from the eyes of people of feeble belief can be seen by the eye of the heart rather than the sensible physical eye, for the heart, like other sensible limbs, has an eye. This point is mentioned in many verses of the Book of God: 'And We have put a barrier before them and a barrier behind them, then We have blindfolded them, so they do not see' (36:9). 'Deaf, dumb, and blind, they do not apply reason' (20:171). 'Have they not travelled over the land so that they may have hearts by which they may apply reason, or ears by which they may hear? Indeed it is not the eyes that turn blind, but the hearts turn blind – those which are in the breasts' (22:46). This last verse explains the meaning of 'eye', 'ear', and so forth. In respect to guidance and error they refer collectively to the organs of the heart and the interior rather than the sensible exterior body. Similarly, all other stated meanings concerning the guided and misguided have such an interpretation, such as His saying 'God is the Master of the faithful: He brings them out of darkness into light. As for the faithless, their patrons are the Rebels, who drive them out of light into darkness' (2:257). 'Indeed We have put iron collars around their necks' (36:8). So, the heart has a world as the senses have their own world, with qualities and effects similar to those of the sensible world.

(6:122). God explains that their life is illuminated by a light by which they walk among people – namely, associate with them – and this association occurs through faculties and senses. Therefore, they have an illuminated life and divine senses and faculties. He also says: 'Thus have we revealed to you the spirit of Our dispensation. You did not know what the Book is, nor what is faith; but We made it a light that We may guide by its means whomever We wish of Our servants' (42:52). He states that this light is an intelligent spirit from the world of Divine Command, as He announces: 'He has written faith into their hearts and strengthened them with a spirit from Him' (58:22). God the Exalted then declares that He guides them to His light, which is the light above all lights and by which He illuminates the heavens and earth, as He says 'God is the light of the heavens and earth' (24:35). He uses an analogy to describe this light by which He illuminates the heavens and earth. He continues:

> The parable of His Light is a niche wherein is a lamp – the lamp is in a glass, the glass as it were a glittering star – lit from a blessed olive tree, neither eastern nor western, whose oil almost lights up, though fire should not touch it. Light upon light. God guides to His light whomever He wishes. (24:35)

Accordingly, His light has two veils illuminated by Him, and they, in turn, illuminate the heavens and the earth. One of them is the niche, which is of less light and is lightened by what there is in it, specifically, the glass bowl, which is enlightened [in turn] by the lamp. So the lamp is the source of the light of the glass bowl and the niche. The glass bowl, on the other hand, is the origin of the light of the niche, which is the brightest light that shines and illuminates. Perhaps the light of the earth derives from the niche which is beneath the glass bowl, and the glass bowl perhaps lightens Heaven, as God the Exalted says: 'He directs the

command from the Heaven to the earth' (32:5). In the holy verse, no mention is made of what is beyond the Heavens and the Earth, and there is no reference in it to the stated glass bowl except that which is understood from His saying 'lit from a blessed olive tree, neither eastern nor western, whose oil almost lights up, though fire should not touch it...'.

Having explained that, God the Exalted states that the niche and all that is in it in likeness is 'in houses God has allowed to be raised, and wherein His Name is celebrated; He is glorified therein, morning and evening, by men whom neither trading nor bargaining distracts from the remembrance of God and the maintenance of prayer and the giving of alms' (24:36-37).

God the Exalted introduces His friends as people who do not forget remembrance or righteous deeds. They are not veiled from the remembrance of God, nor do they turn to other than Him unless with Him. They are the sincere and have devoted themselves to Him. Their state was described briefly in the last chapter in the discussion of the verses concerning them. God the Exalted says: 'Glory be to God above that they describe, except for God's sincere servants' (37:159-160). Regarding Joseph, He says: 'So it was, that We might turn away from him all evil and indecency; he was one of Our sincere servants' (12:24). God also states: 'Iblis said, "By Your might, I will surely pervert them, excepting those of Your servants that are sincere"' (38:82-83). 'So they will indeed be arraigned – all except God's sincere servants' (37:127-128). 'So you will be requited only for what you used to do – all except God's sincere servants' (37:39-40).

God explains that He is far above all praise except their praise. He preserves them from evil and indecency, so that the temptation of Satan touches everyone except them. He further declares that they are exempted from the horrors of the Day of Judgment, such as the fainting, the fear caused

by the trumpet, the summoning and giving of the Book, and the reckoning and the weighing, and that their reward is not due to their deeds for they have no deeds to reckon. These are but a few of the gifts of God the Exalted to His friends.

By now, it should be understood that one of the gifts God has given them is annihilating them in their acts, attributes, and essences. The first thing that they lose is their acts (in at least six aspects mentioned by scholars): death, life, illness, health, poverty, and wealth. They see all of these from God the Exalted as one notices the movement but does not see the mover, though he is aware of him. So, God the Exalted takes their place in their acts, as if their acts are His act. In *Al-Kafi* and *Tawhid al-Saduq*, it is related that Imam al-Sadiq (A) in his interpretation of God's words 'So when they roused Our wrath, We took vengeance on them' (43:55) has said:

> God the Exalted and Glorified does not become wrathful like us, but He has created certain friends for Himself who become wrathful and are satisfied. They are creatures and are cherished [by Him], but He has made their satisfaction His satisfaction and their anger His anger, for He appointed them to call to Him and to be the signs indicating Him, and they are such for this. It is not so that these states apply to Him as they apply to His creatures, and this is the meaning of what He said about that. God says: 'Truly he who insults one of My friends comes to fight Me and calls Me to such a fight.'[4] He also states: 'Whoever obeys the Apostle certainly obeys God' (4:80), and 'Indeed those who swear allegiance to you, swear allegiance only to God' (48:10).

[4] *Al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 144; *Tawhid al-Saduq*, p. 169; *Ma'ani al-Akhbar*, p. 19; *Mustadrak al-Wasa'il*, vol. 9, p. 103.

These and their likes should be interpreted in the same way I mentioned. Likewise satisfaction, wrath and other (states) similar to them.[5]

By saying 'and others similar to them', the Imam refers to many verses and *hadith*s dealing with this subject, such as the verses: 'You did not throw when you threw, rather it was God Who threw' (8:17), and 'Nor does he speak out of his own desire: it is just a revelation that is revealed' (53:3-4). It should be noted that the pronoun 'it' in the last verse refers to their speech. God also declares: 'You have no hand in the matter' (3:128). Similarly, the Prophet (S) says: 'Fatimah is a part of me, and he who bothers her bothers me, and he who bothers me bothers God'.[6] The *hadith*s related by Al-Daylami will come soon.

Second, God will make them lose their attributes. As understood from the *hadith*s transmitted from the Household of the Prophet, the most important of these will be five: life, knowledge, power, hearing, and seeing. God will take over those attributes. It is related in *Al-Kafi* that Imam al-Sadiq (A) has said:

> God, Exalted is His glory, says: 'None of my servants comes closer to Me by anything dearer to Me than what I made obligatory for him. He keeps coming closer to Me by supererogatory acts until I love him. Once I love him, I will be his hearing by which he hears, his eye by which he sees, his tongue by which he speaks, and his hands by which he acts. If he calls Me,

[5] *Al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 144; *Tawhid al-Saduq*, p. 168; *Ma'ani al-Akhbar*, p. 19.

[6] Al-Saduq, *Al-Amali*, p. 165; *Kifayat al-Athar*, p. 65; *Dala'il al-Imamah*, p. 135; *Al-Ta'ajjub*, p. 55.

I will answer him; and if he asks Me, I will give him.'[7]

This is one of the *hadiths* related by both Shi'a and Sunnis. It is confirmed by the Book of God the Almighty: 'Say, if you love God, then follow me; God will love you and forgive you your sins' (3:31) and 'O you who have faith! Be wary of God and have faith in His Apostle. He will grant you a double share of His mercy and give you a light to walk by and forgive you' (57:28). The style of the two verses and the way they order people to follow the Messenger and to have faith in him show that God's love for His servant is mercy upon mercy. God gives them a light to walk among people (namely, to associate and live with them), whereas they used to associate and live with people with the faculties of the soul and its devices, such as hearing, seeing, hands and the tongue; now, they are replaced with light from the Lord. This light is a living spirit which gives life to man, as was hinted at in explaining God's saying 'Is he who was dead, and We gave him life, and appointed for him a light by which he walks among the people...' (6:122). The form of the words 'We appointed for him a light...' shows it is an explanation for 'We gave him life'. In Al-Mas'udi's *Ithbat al-Wasiyyah*, it is related that Imam 'Ali in one of his sermons said:

> God! Glorified are You! Which eye can see the glory of Your light or ascend to the brightness of Your power's light? Which understanding can understand what is beyond them except those eyes You have uncovered and torn their blinding veils? So their spirits have ascended round the wings of the spirits and supplicated You in the pillars of Your existence and entered the lights of Your glory and transcended the earth to look at the level of Your majesty. They are

[7] *Al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 352; *Wasa'il al-Shiah*, vol. 4, p. 72; *Mustadrak al-Wasa'il*, vol. 3, p. 58.

> called by the people who visit [Him] in the Divine Dominion (*malakut*) and by the people of spiritual realities, the dwellers of the lofty chambers.[8]

The *hadith* related by Hisham was also discussed in Chapter 3. In short, these ideas have been frequently repeated in prayers and supplications. In Imam 'Ali's supplication for the month of Sha'ban, for example, which discusses both the beginning and the end of the path (that is to say, both wayfaring and witnessing), we read:

> O God! Let my interest be in Your remembrance by Your remembrance, and make my aspiration be to win the bliss of Your Names and the place of Your holiness....O God! Let me be absolutely devoted to You and enlighten the eyes of our hearts by the light of looking at You, until the eyes of the hearts rend the veils of light and reach the origin of greatness, and our spirits become attached to the might of Your holiness. O God! Let me be among those whom You called and they answered You, and looked at them and they fell down to Your Majesty, and You spoke to them secretly and they worked for You openly....O God! Join me to the light of Your joyful might so that I know You and turn away from other than You.[9]

In Ibn Fahd's *'Uddat al-Da'i*, Wahab ibn Munabbih relates: 'One of God's revelations to David was "O David! My remembrance is for those who remember, My Paradise is for the obedient, My love is for the eager, but I am especially the reward of the lovers."'[10]

Third, He makes them lose their essence, and then they

[8] *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 25, p. 30; *Al-Mizan*, vol. 6, p. 175; *Mizan al-Hikmah*, vol. 3, p. 1882.

[9] *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 91, p. 98-99; *Nahj al-Sa'adah*, vol. 6, p. 145; *Mizan al-Hikmah*, vol. 2, p. 966; *Iqbal al-Amal*, vol. 3, p. 298.

[10] *'Uddat al-Da'i*, p. 237; *Al-Jawahir al-Saniyyah*, p. 89, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 14, p. 40.

will have neither a name nor a description, and God the Exalted will take their position. It is mentioned at the end of *The Treatise of Tawhid al-Saduq* that this station is greater than it can be described in words or hinted at, and if it is called a station, it is only a figure of speech. It is one of God's spiritual disclosures to His Prophet Muhammad, and his pure Household join him in it.

I may add that now they are joined by some of the saints of the Prophet's community;[11] many *hadiths* indicate that

[11] One of Tabataba'i's central theses in this treatise is that each individual has the chance to achieve the position of sainthood (*walayah*). The perfect man, who has passed through all the stages of his spiritual journey and who has gained a higher level of enlightened knowledge and love for God, is constituted of a manifestation of the attributes and perfections of God at a high level. The human being can even go higher than the angels, because he has experienced all stages of existence from the lowest to the highest. It is for this reason that divine vicegerency (*khilafat Allah*) has been designated for a duality of both non-material and bodily being, that is., a human being not an angel. Insofar as human souls exist at a low level of the perfection of being, they can possess only natural agency, but once they advance to a higher degree, they achieve the possibility of divine agency, until they annihilate in God. Similar views can be seen in most Islamic philosophers and mystics as well. Shaykh Suhravardi regards those who have attained a certain degree of non-materiality as capable of creating an 'archetypal substance' (*jawhar mithali*), and he calls this the station of the creative imperative (*kawn*), 'Be!' (See Shaykh al-Ishraq, *Al-Hikmat al-Ishraq* (Qum: Bidar Publications (lithograph), 1361 AH (solar)), vol. 2, p. 242.) The use of the word *kawn* is, of course, an allusion to Qur'an 36:82: 'His command, when He wills a thing to exist, He says to it, "Be!" and it is created.' When the gnostic reaches the appropriate station, he acquires a similar power, the power of divine agency.) He regards the acquisition of theosophical insight to be impossible before attaining the quality of extra-corporeality. (Shaykh al-Ishraq, *Al-Talwihat*, Part I, p. 113. See also Part III, p. 63, where he affirms a special locus for the knowledge arising from intuition.) Ibn Sina regards the possibility of inducing effects in nature to be one of the necessary qualities of the souls of

God the Exalted makes their followers join them in the Hereafter according to their degrees. In the *hadith* related by Al-Daylami (quoted below), it is said: 'And he will be transferred from the abode of annihilation to that of subsistence and from the abode of Satan to that of the Merciful...' Accordingly, it is understood that the stations and honours that God promises the communities in the Hereafter are given to God's friends in this world, and joining their Imam is one of them. This station which (as you have known) is greater than a station is explained by frequently recurring *hadiths* from the Imams. These *hadiths* deny the attributes and explain that God's saints can join them in that. One of the gifts is – as was said – their achievement in seeing the worlds mediating between them and their Lord, mighty is His Name. For example, in *Bihar al-Anwar*, in a *hadith* from *Irshad* by Al-Daylami, Majlisi relates from two authorities:

> God the Exalted said: 'O Ahmad! Do you know which life is more joyful and which life is more permanent?'

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prophets, in the sense that once the soul reaches a certain level of perfection and non-materiality, it acquires the capacity of exercising power over nature. Once the soul transcends the bounds of the body, it can exert influence on other bodies, to the extent of changing their constituent elements and inducing accidents within them so that they become effective persons in the world and society. See the section on *Al-Tabi'iat* in Ibn Sina, *Al-Shifa* (Qum: Maktabat al-Najafi al-Mar'ashi, 1983), part 6, segment 4, ch. 4. Likewise, Ghazzali holds the attainment of mystical knowledge to be dependent upon a similar transformation. See Abu Hamid Ghazzali, *Al-Munqidh min al-Dilal* (Cairo: n.p., n.d.), p. 58-60. Rumi emphasises the same point repeatedly in the *Mathnavi*, as when he says: 'Become spirit, and by means of spirit come to know spirit', or 'advance from solidity, become spirit', or again 'become resurrection, and behold resurrection; this is the condition for having the properties of all stages of being so as to see all things.' [SKT]

He answered: 'O God! No!'

God said: 'He who has a joyful life and does not falter in remembering Me, nor forgets My blessings, nor ignores My right, and he seeks my satisfaction day and night. On the other hand, he who works for his soul until this world becomes inferior and small in his eyes has a permanent life, and the Hereafter becomes great for him. He prefers My desire to his desire, seeks My satisfaction, honours the right of My blessing, remembers what I have done for him, watches Me day and night when committing any vice or sin, purifies his heart from everything I dislike, hates Satan and his temptation, and does not allow Iblis to have any power or authority on his heart. If he does so, I will set My love in his heart, and I will make his heart Mine. I bless his leisure, occupation, aspiration and speech with the blessing I conferred on the people of My love among My creatures. I further open the eye of his heart and his hearing until he hears with his heart and looks with his heart at My Majesty and Greatness, and I make the world narrow for him and make him hate its pleasures and warn him against this world and its objects as the shepherd fears for his sheep the pastures of death. Then he will run away from people most hurriedly and will be transferred from the abode of annihilation to that of subsistence and from the abode of Satan to that of the Merciful.

'O Ahmad! I will also adorn him with awe and greatness. This is indeed the joyful and permanent life, which is the station of the satisfied. I will further confer three things on him who acts to My satisfaction. I will teach him gratitude undiluted with ignorance, remembrance free from forgetfulness, and love that he will never prefer the people's love over My love. When he loves Me, I will love him and open the eye of his heart to My Majesty, and I will never hide from him the chosen of My people, and I will speak to him in the darkness of night and the light of day until

he ceases communing and associating with people, and I will make him hear My speech and the speech of My angels.

'I will also reveal to him the secret which I have veiled from My people, and I will dress him the garment of modesty so that all people will be humble with him. He will walk the earth with his sins pardoned, and I will make his heart awake and seeing, and I will not hide from him anything of Paradise or the Fire. I will inform him of the fear and difficulty of the Day of Judgment, and how I will take the rich and the poor and the ignorant and the scholars to account, and I will put him to sleep in his grave, and I will send Munkar and Nakir to question him, but he will not see the grief of death or the darkness of the grave or the stone of the grave or the horror of the Day of Judgment. Then I will set his Balance and unroll his book of acts and put it in his right hand and he will read it broadly, and I will have no interpreter between him and Me. These are the traits of the lovers.

'O Ahmad! Make your aspirations one aspiration and make your endeavour one endeavour and be alive and never forget, for whoever forgets Me, I do not care in which valley he perishes."[12]

In *Bihar al-Anwar*, in a *hadith* related also in *Al-Kafi*, *Al-Ma'ani* and Rawandi's *Nawadir* through different chains of narration, Imam al-Sadiq (A) and Imam al-Kadim (A) say – and these are the words cited in *Al-Kafi*:

The Messenger of God said to Harithah ibn Malik ibn al-Nu'man al-Ansari when he met him: 'O Harithah ibn Malik al-Nu'mani! How do you fare?'

He answered: 'O Messenger of God! I am a true believer.'

[12] *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 77, p. 28; *Al-Jawahir al-Saniyyah*, p. 198.

> Then the Messenger of God told him: 'For every thing there is a truth, but what is the truth of your speech?'
>
> In reply he said: 'O Messenger of God! I distanced my soul from this world, and so I spend my nights awake and thirst in my hot days. I look at the throne of my Lord as if it is set for Judgment, and it is as if I look at the people of Paradise visiting each other in Paradise and I listen to the howling of the people of the Fire in Hell.'
>
> The Messenger of God stated: 'He is a servant whose heart God has enlightened. You have seen the truth, so be steadfast!'"[13]

If you look carefully into the verses and *hadiths* we have cited so far (and indeed there are many more we could quote), and if you understand the hints given in these passages, you will find in them wonders that neither the mind nor language can explain. Finally, God is the only guide and aid, and we end our speech here. Praised be God for giving me success to finish this treatise, and God's peace and greetings be on our master Muhammad and his Household.

[13] *Al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 53-54; *Al-Mahasin*, vol. 1, p. 246; *Mishkat al-Anwar*, p. 84; *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 22, p. 126; *Ma'ani al-Akhbar*, p. 187; *Nawadir*, p. 138.

Appendix

Hereunder is a list, in Arabic, of the hadiths *cited by 'Allamah Tabataba'i.*

Page	*Hadith*
8	رسول الله (ص): « إنّا معاشر الأنبياء نكلّم الناس على قدر عقولهم».
10	الإمام الصادق (ع): «إنّ حديثنا صعب مستصعب لا يحتمله إلاّ ملك مقرّب، أو نبيّ مرسل، أو عبد مؤمن امتحن الله قلبه بالإيمان».
10	الإمام الصادق (ع):« إنّ من حديثنا ما لا يتحمله ملك مقرّب، ولا نبيّ مرسل ولا عبد مؤمن».
10	الإمام الباقر (ع): «إنّ حديثنا صعب مستصعب ذكوان أجرد ولا يحتمله ملك مقرّب، ولا نبيّ مرسل، ولا عبد امتحن الله قلبه للإيمان، أمّا الصعب فهو الّذي لم يركب بعد، وأمّا المستصعب فهو الّذي يهرب منه إذا رؤي، وأمّا الذكوان فهو ذكاء المؤمنين، وأمّا الأجرد فهو الّذي لا يتعلّق به شيء من بين يديه ولا من خلفه، وهو قول الله: ﴿الله نزّل أحسن الحديث﴾ فأحسن الحديث حديثنا، ولا يحتمل أحد الخلائق أمره بكماله حتى يحدّه، لأنّه من حدّ شيئاً فهو أكبر منه، والحمد لله على التوفيق والإنكار هو الكفر.»
11	الإمام الصادق (ع): «إنّا أمرنا هو الحقّ، وحقّ الحقّ، وهو الظاهر، وباطن الظاهر، وباطن الباطن، وهو السرّ، وسرّ السرّ، وسرّ المستسرّ، وسرّ مقنّع بالسرّ».
11	رسول الله (ص): «إنّ للقرآن ظهراً وبطناً، ولبطنه بطناً إلى سبعة أبطن».
12	رسول الله (ص): «إنّ ظاهره حكم، وباطنه علم».
12	الإمام الصادق (ع): «فقلت له: فأيّ شيء هو، أصلحك الله؟ قال: فقلّب يده مرّتين أو

ثلاثاً ثمّ قال (ع): «لو أجبتك فيه لكفرت».

12 الإمام السجاد (ع): «وربّ جوهر علمٍ لو أبوح به لقيل لي: أنت ممن يعبد الوثنا»

12 الإمام الباقر (ع): «ذكرت التقيّة يوماً عند علي بن الحسين (ع) فقال (ع): «والله لو علم أبو ذرّ ما في قلب سلمان لقتله وقد آخى بينهما رسول الله (ص)».

13 الإمام الباقر (ع): «لو أذعتها لعليك لعنة الله والملائكة والناس أجمعين».

13 عن جابر: أنه شكى ضيق نفسه عن تحمّلها وإخفائها بعد أبي جعفر (ع) إلى أبي عبد الله (ع) فأمره أن يحفر حفيرة ويدلي رأسه فيها، ثم يحدث بما تحمّله ثمّ يطمّها، فإنّ الأرض تستر عليه».

13 الإمام الباقر (ع): «يا جابر، ما سترنا عنكم أكثر مما أظهرنا لكم».

23 قد سئل رسول الله (ص) عن الإحسان فقال: «أن تعبد الله كأنك تراه، فإن لم تكن تراه فإنه يراك».

25 الإمام السجاد (ع): «حبّ الدنيا رأس كلّ خطيئة»

35 عن الإمام الصادق (ع) في قول الله تعالى: ﴿وإذ أخذ ربّك من بني آدم من ظهورهم ذريتهم وأشهدهم على أنفسهم﴾ قال: «كان ذلك معاينة الله فأنساهم المعاينة وأثبتهم الإقرار في صدورهم، ولو لا ذلك لم يعرف أحد خالقه ورازقه، وهو قول الله: ﴿ولئن سألتهم من خلقهم ليقولنّ الله﴾».

36 عن الإمام الصادق (ع) في قوله تعالى: ﴿وإذ أخذ ربّك من بني آدم من ظهورهم﴾ إلى قوله ﴿بلى﴾ قلت: معاينة كان هذا؟ قال: «نعم، فثبتت المعرفة ونسوا الموقف وسيذكرونه، ولو لا ذلك لم يدر أحد من خالقه، فمنهم من أقرّ بلسانه في الذرّ ولم يؤمن بقلبه، فقال الله: ﴿فما كانوا ليؤمنوا بما كذّبوا من قبل﴾».

36 سألت أبا جعفر (ع) عن قول الله: ﴿وإذ أخذ ربّك من بني آدم﴾ إلى ﴿أنفسهم﴾ قال: «أخرج الله من ظهر آدم ذرّيته إلى يوم القيامة، فخرجوا كالذرّ فعرّفهم نفسه، وأراهم نفسه ولو لا ذلك ما عرف أحد ربّه، وذلك قوله: ﴿ولئن سألتهم من خلق السمٰوات

والأرض ليقلنّ الله﴾».

36 عن الإمام الصادق (ع) قال: قلت له: أخبرني عن الله عزّ وجلّ هل يراه المؤمنون يوم القيامة؟ قال: «نعم، وقد رأوه قبل يوم القيامة. فقلت: متى؟ قال: حين قال لهم: ﴿ألست بربّكم قالوا بلى﴾. ثمّ سكت ساعة، ثمّ قال: وإنّ المؤمنين ليرونه في الدنيا قبل يوم القيامة ألست تراه في وقتك هذا؟ قال أبو بصير: فقلت له: جعلت فداك، فأحدّث بهذا عنك؟ فقال: لا، فإنّك إذا حدّثت به فأنكر جاهل بمعنى ما تقوله ثمّ قدّر أنّ ذلك تشبيه وكفر، وليست الرؤية بالقلب كالرؤية بالعين، تعالى الله عمّا يصفه المشبّهون والملحدون».

37 الإمام الصادق (ع): «ولكنّه ينزل إلى سماء الدنيا بغير معاناة ولا حركة فيكون هو كما في السماء السابعة على العرش كذلك هو في سماء الدنيا إنّما يكشف عن عظمته، ويري أولياءه نفسه حيث شاء، ويكشف ما شاء من قدرته، ومنظره بالقلب والبعد سواء».

37 أمير المؤمنين (ع): «وسأل موسى وجرى على لسانه من حمد الله عزّ وجلّ: ﴿ربّ أرني أنظر إليك﴾ فكانت مسألته تلك أمراً عظيماً، وسأل أمراً جسيماً فعوقب، فقال الله تعالى: لن تراني في الدنيا حتّى تموت فتراني في الآخرة».

38 رسول الله (ص): «ولك في كل جمعة زورة».

38 رسول الله (ص): «سترون ربّكم كما ترون القمر ليلة البدر».

38 قال: سألت أبا الحسن (ع): هل رأى رسول الله ربّه عزّ وجلّ؟ فقال: «نعم، بقلبه رآه، أمّا سمعت الله عزّ وجلّ يقول: ﴿ما كذب الفؤاد ما رأى﴾ لم يره بالبصر ولكن رآه بالفؤاد».

38 الإمام الرضا (ع): «إذا نظر إلى ربّه بقلبه جعله في نور مثل نور الحجب حتّى يستبين له ما في الحجب».

38 الإمام الصادق (ع): «بينما رسول الله (ص) في منزل فاطمة والحسين في حجره إذ بكى وخرّ ساجداً، ثمّ قال: يا فاطمة يا بنت محمد (ص)، إنّ العليّ الاعلى ترائى لي في بيتك هذا في ساعتي هذه في أحسن صورة وأهيأ هيئة، وقال لي: يا محمد (ص)، أتحبّ الحسين (ع)؟ فقلت: نعم، قرّة عيني، وريحانتي، وثمرة فؤادي، وجلدة ما بين عيني، وقال لي: يا

محمد، ووضع يده على رأس الحسين، يورك من مولودٍ عليه بركاتي وصلواتي ورحمتي ورضواني».

39 أمير المؤمنين (ع): «لم أعبد ربّاً لم أره».

39 أمير المؤمنين (ع): «ما رأيت شيئاً إلاّ ورأيت الله قبله».

47 رسول الله (ص): «افضل الاعمال أحزها»

47 رسول الله (ص) :«إنما بعثت لاتمّم مكارم الاخلاق».

48 أمير المؤمنين (ع): «إنّ للجنّة ثمانية أبواب: باب يدخل منه النبيّون والصدّيقون، وباب يدخل منه الشهداء والصالحون، وخمسة أبواب يدخل منها شيعتنا ومحبّونا، فلا أزال واقفاً على الصراط أدعو وأقول: ربّ سلّم شيعتي ومحبّي وأنصاري وأوليائي ومن تولاّني في دار الدنيا، فإذا النداء من بطنان العرش: قد أجبت دعوتك، وشفعت في شيعتك، ويشفع كلّ رجل من شيعتي ومن تولاّني ونصرني وحارب من حاربني بفعل أو قول في سبعين من جيرانه وأقربائه، وباب يدخل منه سائر المسلمين ممن يشهد أن لا إله إلاّ الله ولم يكن في قلبه مثقال ذرّة من بغضنا أهل البيت».

48 الإمام الباقر (ع): قلت له: جعلت فداك، ما حال الموحّدين المقرّين بنبوّة محمد (ص) من المسلمين المذنبين الّذين يموتون وليس لهم إمام ولا يعرفون ولايتكم؟ فقال: «أمّا هؤلاء فإنّهم في حفرهم لا يخرجون منها، فمن كان له عمل صالح ولم يظهر منه عداوة فإنّه يخدّ له خدّ إلى الجنّة الّتي خلقها الله بالمغرب فيدخل عليه الروح في حفرته إلى يوم القيامة حتى يلقى الله فيحاسبه بحسابته وسيئاته فأمّا إلى الجنّة وإمّا إلى النار، فهؤلاء المرجون لأمر الله. قال: وكذلك يفعل بالمستضعفين والبله والأطفال وأولاد المسلمين الّذين لم يبلغوا الحلم. وأمّا النصاب من أهل القبلة فإنّه يخدّ لهم خدّ إلى النار الّتي خلقها الله في المشرق فيدخل عليهم اللهب والشرر والدخان وفورة الحميم إلى يوم القيامة، ثمّ بعد مصيرهم إلى الحميم.»

48 أمير المؤمنين (ع): «إنّ للجنّة ثمانية أبواب: باب يدخل منه النبيّون والصدّيقون، وباب يدخل منه الشهداء والصالحون، وخمسة أبواب يدخل منها شيعتنا ومحبّونا، فلا أزال واقفاً على الصراط أدعو وأقول: ربّ سلّم شيعتي ومحبّي وأنصاري وأوليائي ومن تولاّني في

دار الدنيا، فإذا النداء من بطنان العرش: قد أجبت دعوتك، وشفعت في شيعتك، ويشفع كلّ رجل من شيعتي ومن تولاّني ونصرني وحارب من حاربني بفعل أو قول في سبعين من جيرانه وأقربائه، وباب يدخل منه سائر المسلمين ممن يشهد أن لا إله إلاّ الله ولم يكن في قلبه مثقال ذرّة من بغضنا أهل البيت».

أمير المؤمنين (ع): «من عرف نفسه عرف ربّه، أو فقد عرف ربّه». 50

أمير المؤمنين (ع): «الكيّس من عرف نفسه وأخلص أعماله». 51

أمير المؤمنين (ع): «المعرفة بالنفس أنفع المعرفتين». 51

أمير المؤمنين (ع): «العارف من عرف نفسه فأعتقها و نزّهها عن كلّ ما يبعدها». 51

أمير المؤمنين (ع): «من عرف نفسه تجرّد». 52

أمير المؤمنين (ع): «من عرف نفسه جاهدها و من جهل نفسه أهملها». 52

أمير المؤمنين (ع): «من عرف نفسه عرف ربّه». 52

أمير المؤمنين (ع): «من عرف نفسه جلّ أمره». 52

أمير المؤمنين (ع): «من جهل نفسه كان بغيره أجهل». 52

أمير المؤمنين (ع): «من عرف نفسه كان لغيره أعرف». 52

أمير المؤمنين (ع): «من عرف نفسه فقد انتهى إلى غاية كلّ معرفة وعلم». 52

أمير المؤمنين (ع): «من لم يعرف نفسه بعد عن سبيل النّجاة و خبط في الضلال و الجهالات». 52

أمير المؤمنين (ع): «معرفة النفس أنفع المعارف». 52

أمير المؤمنين (ع): «نال الفوز الأكبر من ظفر بمعرفة النفس». 52

أمير المؤمنين (ع): «لاتجهل نفسك، فإنّ الجاهل معرفة نفسه جاهل بكل شيء». 54

56 الإمام الصادق (ع): «العباد ثلاثة: قوم عبدوا الله عزّ و جلّ خوفاً، فتلك عبادة العبيد؛ و قوم عبدوا الله تبارك و تعالى طلبا للثّواب؛ فتلك عبادة الاجراء؛ و قوم عبدوا الله عزّ و جلّ حبّاً له؛ فتلك عبادة الأحرار و هي أفضل العبادة».

57 نهج البلاغة: «إنّ قوماً عبدوا الله رغبة فتلك عبادة التجّار، و إنّ قوماً عبدوا الله رهبة فتلك عبادة العبيد و إنّ قوماً عبدوا الله شكراً فتلك عبادة الأحرار».

57 الإمام الصادق (ع): «إنّ الناس يعبدون الله على ثلاثة أوجه: فطبقة يعبدونه رغبة في ثوابه فتلك عبادة الحرصاء وهو الطمع، وآخرون يعبدونه خوفاً من النار فتلك عبادة العبيد وهي رهبة ولكنّي اعبده حبّاً له عزّ وجلّ فتلك عبادة الكرام لقوله عزّ وجلّ: ﴿وهم من فزع يومئذٍ آمنون﴾. فمن أحبّ الله عزّ و جلّ أحبّه الله؛ و من أحبّه الله كان من الآمنين».

57 كان رسول الله (ص) يبكي حتّى يغشى عليه، فقيل له: أليس قد غفر الله لك ما تقدّم من ذنبك وما تأخّر؟ فقال: «أفلا أكون عبداً شكوراً؟»

59 الإمام الصادق (ع): «العلم مقرون بالعمل، فمن علم عمل، ومن عمل علم».

59 رسول الله (ص):«من عمل بما يعلم ورثه الله علم ما لم يعلم».

62 الإمام الصادق(ع):« من زعم أنّه يعرف الله بحجاب أو بصورة أو بمثال، فهو مشرك لأنّ الحجاب و الصورة و المثال غيره، و إنّما هو واحد موحّد، فكيف يوّحد من زعم أنّه عرفه بغيره؟ إنّما عرف الله من عرفه بالله، فمن لم يعرفه به فليس يعرفه، إنّما يعرف غيره. ليس بين الخالق و المخلوق شيء والله خالق الأشياء لا من شيء يسمّى باسمائه، فهو غير أسمائه و الاسماء غيره و الموصوف غير الواصف، فمن زعم أنّه يؤمن بما لا يعرف فهو ضالّ عن المعرفة، لا يدرك مخلوق شيئا الاّ بالله والله خلوّ من خلقه و خلقه خلوّ منه».

65 الإمام الصادق (ع): «من زعم أنّه يعرف الله بتوهّم القلوب فهو مشرك، ومن زعم أنّه يعرف الله بالإسم دون المعنى فقد أقرّ بالطعن، لأنّ الإسم محدث، ومن زعم أنّه يعبد الإسم والمعنى فقد جعل مع الله شريكاً، ومن زعم أنّه يعبد بالصفة لا بالإدراك فقد أحال على الغائب، ومن زعم أنّه يضيف الموصوف إلى الصفة فقد صغر بالكبير،﴿وما قدروا الله حقّ قدره﴾. قيل له: فكيف سبيل التوحيد؟ قال (ع): «الباب البحث ممكن، وطلب

المخرج موجود، إنّ معرفة عين الشاهد قبل صفته، ومعرفة صفة الغائب قبل عينه». قيل : و كيف تعرف عين الشاهد قبل صفته؟ قال (ع): «تعرفه و تعلم علمه و تعرف نفسك به و لا تعرّف نفسك بنفسك من نفسك و تعلم انّ ما فيه له و به، كما قالوا ليوسف: ﴿أإنك لأنت يوسف قال أنا يوسف و هذا أخي﴾ فعرفوه به و لم يعرفوه بغيره و لا أثبتوه من أنفسهم بتوهّم القلوب...»

67 الإمام الباقر (ع) : «لا يكون العبد عابداً لله حق عبادته حتّى ينقطع عن الخلق كلّهم اليه؛ فحينئذ يقول هذا خالص لي، فيقبله بكرمه»

67 الإمام الصادق(ع):« ما أنعم الله على عبد أجلّ من أن لا يكون في قلبه مع الله غيره».

68 الإمام الجواد (ع) : «أفضل العبادة الإخلاص»

69 الإمام الكاظم (ع): «ليس بينه و بين خلقه حجاب إلاّ خلقه، فقد احتجب بغير حجاب محجوب واستتر بغير ستر مستور».

88 رسول الله (ص): «ولو لا أنّ الشياطين يحومون حول قلوب بني آدم لرأوا ملكوت السموات والأرض».

92 الإمام الصادق (ع) في قول الله تعالى ﴿فلمّا آسفونا انتقمنا منهم﴾: «إنّ الله تبارك وتعالى لا يأسفنا، ولكنّه خلق أولياء لنفسه يأسفون ويرضون وهم مخلوقون مربوبون، فجعل رضاهم رضا نفسه وسخطهم سخط نفسه. وذلك لأنه جعلهم الدعاة إليه والأدلاّء عليه فلذلك صاروا كذلك، وليس أنّ ذلك يصل إلى الله كما يصل إلى خلقه، ولكن هذا معنى ما قال من ذلك. وقال أيضاً: «من أهان لي ولياً فقد بارزني بالمبارزة ودعاني إليها». وقال آيضاً: ﴿من يطع الرسول فقد أطاع الله﴾. وقال أيضاً: ﴿إنّ الّذين يبايعونك إنّما يبايعون الله﴾.

93 رسول الله (ص): «فاطمة بضعة منّي، من آذاها فقد آذاني، ومن آذاني فقد آذى الله».

الإمام الباقر (ع): «إنّ الله جلّ جلاله قال: ما تقرّب إليّ عبد من عبادي بشيء أحبّ إليّ ممّا افترضت عليه، وأنّه ليتقرّب إليّ بالنافلة حتى احبّه، فاذا أحببته كنت سمعه الّذي يسمع به، وبصره الّذي يبصر به، ولسانه الّذي ينطق به، ويده الّتي يبطش بها، إن دعاني

أجبته، وإن سألني أعطيته».

94 أمير المؤمنين (ع): «سبحانك ايّ عين تقوم تصب بهاء نورك، وترقى إلى نور ضياء قدرتك؟ وأيّ فهم يفهم ما دون ذلك إلاّ أبصار كشفت عنها الأغطية، وهتكت عنها الحجب العميّة، فرقت أرواحها إلى أطراف أجنحة الأرواح، فناجوك في أركانك، وولجوا بين أنوار بهائك، ونظروا من مرتقى التربة إلى مستوى كبريائك، فسمّاهم أهل الملكوت زوّاراً، ودعاهم أهل الجبروت عمّاراً».

95 روي أن الله أوحى إلى داود (ع): «يا داود! ذكري للذاكرين و جنّتي للمطيعين و حبّي للمشتاقين و أنا خاصّة للمحبّين».

97 رسول الله (ص): «قال الله تعالى: يا أحمد، هل تدري ايّ عيش أهنى، وأيّ حياة أبقى؟ قال: اللهمّ لا. قال: أمّا العيش الهنيء فهو الّذي لا يفتر صاحبه عن ذكري، ولا ينسى نعمتي، ولا يجهل حقّي يطلب رضائي في ليله ونهاره. أمّا الحياة الباقية فهي الّتي يعمل لنفسه حتّى تهون عليه الدنيا وتصغر في عينه، وتعظم الآخرة عنده، ويؤثر هواي على هواه، ويبتغي مرضاتي، ويعظّم حقّ نعمتي، ويذكر عملي به، ويراقبني بالليل والنهار عند كلّ سيّئة أو معصيّة، وينقّي قلبه عن كلّ ما أكره....»

99 الإمام الصادق أو الإمام الكاظم (ع): استقبل رسول الله (ص) حارث بن مالك بن النعمان الأنصاري فقال له: «كيف أنت، يا حارث بن مالك النعمان»؟ فقال:« يا رسول الله، مؤمن حقا». فقال له رسول الله (ص): «لكلّ شيء حقيقة، فما حقيقة قولك»؟ فقال:« يا رسول الله، عزفت نفسي عن الدنيا فأسهرت ليلي، وأظمأت هواجري، وكأنّي أنظر إلى عرش ربّي وقد وضع للحساب، وكأنّي أنظر إلى اهل الجنّة يتزاورون في الجنّة، وكأنّي أسمع عواء أهل النار في النار». فقال رسول الله (ص): «عبد نوّر الله قلبه أبصرت فأثبت».

99 الإمام الصادق (ع): انّ الله – جلّ جلاله – قال:« ما تقرّب إليّ عبد من عبادي بشيء أحبّ إليّ ممّا افترضت عليه و انّه ليتقرّب إليّ بالنّافله حتّى احبّه، فإذا احببته كنت سمعه الّذي يسمع به و بصره الّذي يبصره به و لسانه الّذي ينطق به و يده الّتي يبطش بها. إن دعاني اجبته و إن سئلني اعطيته».

Glossary

'adam non-existence
al-aḥadiyyat al-muṭlaqah absolute Unicity
ahl al-bayt al-nabī Household of the Prophet (S)
ahl al-ẓāhir people of the exterior
'ajz incapacity
ākhirah Hereafter
'ālam al-ḥaqīqah realm of reality
al-'ālam al-māddī material realm
'ālam al-maḥw realm of effacement
'alam al-mithāl intermediate world
'ālim knowing subject
anā'iyyah I-ness
anwār al-khiyaliyyah imaginal lights
'āqil knowing subject
'araḍ accident
'ārif mystic
aṣālat al-wujūd primacy of existence
āthār effects
awliyā' saints
awwal first
āyāt signs
barzakh purgatory, intermediate world
basīṭ al-ḥaqīqah kull al-ashyā' the real sheer and indivisible reality is all things
bāṭin interior
bisāṭah simplicity
burhān al-ṣiddiqīn proof of the righteous
dhāt Allah essence of Allah
dīn religion
dunyā material world
fa'ālah an Arabic grammatical pattern
fanā' annihilation
al-fanā' fī al-dhāt annihilation in the Essence
fānī fī Allah annihilated in Allah
faqr indigence
fayḍ emanation
fi'ālah an Arabic grammatical pattern
ghayb unseen
al-ghayb al-waḥdat al-mukhtaṣṣat bi-dhātihi al-wājibiyyah the Hidden Unity that is specific to His Necessary Essence
ḥadīth al-kanz treasured hadith
ḥadīth al-qudsī sacred tradition
ḥajj pilgrimage
ḥaml bi al-raqīqah predication of intangible reality
ḥaqā'iq al-ilāhī divine realities
ḥaqīqah Truth
al-ḥarakat al-jawhariyyah substantial motion
al-ḥikmat al-muta'āliyyah

Transcendent philosophy
ḥiṣṣat al-wujūd portion of being
ḥubb love
ḥuḍūr presence
ḥuḍūr al-shay' lil-shay' the presence of something by something else
al-huwiyyat al-ghaybiyyat al-ilāhiyyah Hidden Divine Ipseity
i'tibārīyyāt conceptual inventions
al-'illat al-ūlā First Cause
'ilm knowledge
al-'ilm al-ḥuḍūrī knowledge by presence
'ilm al-nafs self-knowledge
īmān faith
imārah leadership
'ishq love
jawhar mithālī archetypal substance
jihād holy struggle
kalām theology
kamālāt perfections
karāmāt miracles
kawn creative imperative
khalīfat Allah divine vicegerency
al-khurūj min al-i'tidāl deviation from the middle path
la'b worldly pleasure
la'ib vain entertainment
lahw vain amusement
liqā' meeting
ma'rifah divine knowledge
ma'rifat al-nafs self-knowledge
ma'rūf the Known
mabda' al-ilāhī Divine Source
maḥabbah love
maḥḍar al-ilāhī presence of divinity
māhiyyah quiddity
majāz metaphorical
malakūt World of Divine Command
mālikiyyah ownership
maqām al-yaqīn the station of certainty
maqāmāt al-ma'nawī spiritual stations
mashhūd witnessed
mawjūdāt existents
maẓāhir manifestations
miqdār quantity
muqarrabūn those who are of a near station to Allah
mutawātir widely transmitted (said of *ḥadīths*)
al-nafs fī waḥdatihā kull al-quwā the soul in its unity is the totality of its faculties
al-nafs jismāniyyat al-ḥudūth wa rūḥāniyyat al-baqā' the human soul is bodily in its advent but spiritual in its survival
naḥw al-wujūd mode of being
nuqṣān incapacity, deficiency
nāṣibī holding enmity towards the Household of the Prophet (S)
qalam al-a'lā Highest Pen
qā'idat imkān al-ashraf principle of the best possible order of beings
qawānīn al-shar' divine law
qurb proximity, closeness
al-quwāt al-ḥaywāniyyah animal faculties
al-quwāt al-nabātiyyah vegetal faculties
raqīqah intangible existent
ru'yat Allah seeing God
rujū' returning
ṣalāt prayers
ṣawm fasting
shāhid witness

shahwah passion
shu'ūn modes
ṣirāt al-mustaqīm the right path
ṣuwar al-naw'iyyat al-barzakhiyyah archetypal forms in the intermediate world
ta'alluq belonging
ta'ayyunāt phenomenalisations
tafsīr Qur'anic exegesis
taḥaqquq realisation
taqiyyah dissimulation
taqwā God-awareness
tashkīk al-wujūd gradation of existence
tashshakhuṣāt individualisations
tawḥid monotheism
'uqūl al-mujarradah purely immaterial entities
walāyah friendship, sainthood
walī Allah friend of God
wajh Allah face of Allah
al-wājib al-wujūd necessary existent
walī saint
wālī governor, political leader
wazn grammatical pattern
wilāyah guardianship
wujūd being, existence
al-wujūd al-jām'i undifferentiated unificational existence
wujūd al-muṭlaqah absolute existence
yawm al-shuhūd the day of witnessing
ẓāhir exterior
zakāt religious tax
ẓilliyyat al-ma'lūl li-'illatih being a shadow of the caused for its cause
ẓuhūrāt manifestations

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